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HISTORY

OF THE

FEMALE SEX;

COMPRISING

A VIEW OF THE HABITS, MANNERS, AND INFLUENCE OF WOMEN, AMONG ALL NATIONS, FROM THE EARLIEST AGES TO THE PRESENT TIME.

Translated from the German of

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HENRY COLBURN, CONDUIT-STREET, NEW BOND-STREET.

1808.

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HISTORY

OF THE

FEMALE SEX.

CHAPTER I.

On the State of the Female Sex in Spain, from the Commencement of the Sixteenth till about the Middle of the Seventeenth Century.

If all that I have said concerning the state of the female sex in France, from the commencement of the sixteenth till the latter half of the seventeenth century, is present to the recollection of my readers, they will be so much the more astonished at the description I am about to give them of the condition of the Spanish women during the same period. The women of Spain and France, like the men of those coun-

tries, differed as widely from each other in their food and lodging, in their dress and decoration, in their pleasures and amusements, in their public and private life, in their figure and demeanor, as if they had not been separated merely by a single chain of mountains, but by immense oceans. These numerous and striking distinctions between neighbouring nations originated neither in the difference of soil and climate, nor in that of political constitution, culture, and religion. The principal cause of them was the difference of the blood, from which sprung the modern Spaniards on the one hand, and the French and various civilized nations of our division of the globe, on the other. Most of the Spanish provinces were for ages peopled by the Moors of Africa, and by many hundred thousand Jews. Toward the conclusion of the fifteenth century terminated the dominion of the Moors. On the reconquest of the country innumerable multitudes of Jews and Moors were expelled with equal impolicy and cruelty. Notwithstanding all these victories and violent proceedings, the Moorish and Jewish blood continued to predominate in most of the provinces of Spain; and this Oriental blood produced Oriental sentiments and man-

ners, or at least gave such an Oriental and foreign tincture to the habits and way of thinking of the descendants of the ancient Hispani, Goths, and other Teutonic nations, as was not to be found among any other people of Europe, excepting those of Slavonic origin.

The Spanish women of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were, almost without exception, small, and extremely meagre. They had abundance of hair of a shining black, a brownish complection, large, sparkling eyes, a good physiognomy, regular features, pretty hands, and feet so diminutive, that the shoes of Spanish ladies were not larger than those of children six years old in other countries of Europe.* Fair hair, blue eyes, and a blooming colour, were very rare in persons of both sexes. This want of freshness of colour the Spanish ladies endeavoured to supply by lustre. They rubbed their faces so long, and with such force, that the skin at

* *D'Aunoy's Letters of Travels into Spain*, p. 125, 138. *Mad. de Motteville*, V. p. 87. *D'Aunoy Mém. sur l'Espagne*, p. 116. "Elles sont presque toutes petites, extremement maigres et menues; elles ont la peau noire, douce et fardée, les traits regaliers, les yeux pleins de feu, les cheveux noirs et en quantité, les mains jolies et les pieds d'une petitesse surprenante."

length shone as if it had been varnished.* The women of Spain dreaded nothing more than that rotundity of form arising from health, and, in particular, fullness of the bosom. As soon as nature began to swell the breasts of girls advancing to years of maturity, they strove by all possible means to counteract her operations, and checked her impulse by thin pieces of lead bound upon the protruding parts. Most were so successful in their resistance to her laws, that the bosoms of the Spanish ladies exhibited no protuberances, but, on the contrary, hollows and cavities.† Lest their charms, as they imagined them, might escape the eyes of observers, the Spanish ladies went with their necks, and their shoulders in particular, uncovered; so that their brown and bony backs were exposed down to the middle of them.‡ The more profuse they were in exhibiting the beau-

* *Letters*, p. 146.

† *Letters*, p. 139. "It is reckoned beautiful among them to have no breasts, and they take care very early to hinder them from growing big. As soon as they begin to appear, they bind thin pieces of lead upon them, as close as one would swaddle a child. And indeed their breasts are as flat and even as a sheet of paper, except the holes and hollowness which their leanness causes, which are pretty many."

‡ *Ibid.*

tics of the upper parts of the body, so much the more carefully they concealed the lower. Women of character held their legs and feet so sacred, that they would rather lose their lives, than suffer a stranger of the other sex, to see either the one or the other.* In order that their feet might never be prophaned by inquisitive eyes, they wore their garments so long as to cover them entirely; and on alighting from coaches, there were boots to let down, and to prevent their feet and legs from being seen.† After a lady had obliged her gallant by all possible civilities and compliance, to confirm her kindness, she would show him her foot, and this they called the highest favor.‡ The feet and legs of queens were so sacred, that it was a crime to think, or at any rate to speak of them. On the arrival of the princess Maria Anna of Austria, the bride of Philip IV. in Spain, a quantity of the finest silk stockings were presented to her in a city where there were manufactories of that article. The major domo of the future queen threw back the stockings with indignation, exclaim-

*Letters, p. 125. "She told me that she had rather lose her life, than they should see her feet."

† D'Aunoy's Letters, p. 131, 139.

‡ Ibid p. 131.

ing; "Know that queens of Spain have no legs!" When the royal bride heard this, she began to weep bitterly, declaring that she would return to Vienna, and that she would never have set foot in Spain, had she known that her legs were to be cut off. The princess was soon pacified, and the king, when he was informed of her uneasiness could not forbear smiling, which was one of the three times that he was known to laugh or smile during his whole life.* The second consort of Charles II. a French princess, took great delight in riding and in the chase, and the king procured her this two-fold pleasure as frequently as possible. One day, she had scarcely mounted a fine Andalusian horse, when the spirited animal began to rear on his hinder legs. At the moment when the horse seemed on the point of falling back with his fair rider, the queen slipped off on one side, and remained with one of her feet hanging in the stirrup. The unruly beast irritated still more at the burden which fell on one side, kicked with the utmost violence in all directions. In the

* *Mém. de Mad. d'Aunoy*, p. 3 and 4. Philip IV. at audiences moved nothing but his lips and his tongue.—"n'ayant rien de mobile en tout son corps que les levres et la langue." *Voy. en Esp.* p. 32.

first moments of danger and alarm, no person durst venture to the assistance of the queen, for this reason, that excepting the king and the chief of the *meninos*, or little pages, no person of the male sex was allowed to touch any part of the queens of Spain, and least of all their feet. As the danger of the queen every moment augmented, two cavaliers at length ran to her relief. One of them seized the bridle of the horse, while the other drew the queen's foot from the stirrup, and in performing this service dislocated his thumb. As soon as they had saved her life, they hastened away with all possible expedition, ordered their fleetest horses to be saddled, and were just preparing for their flight out of the kingdom, when a messenger came to inform them that at the queen's intercession, the king had pardoned the crime they had committed in touching her person.*

Both sexes arrive at puberty much earlier in Spain, than in any other country in Europe; on which account it was common there, as in the regions of the East, for boys, who were mere infants in years, understanding and knowledge, to marry girls still younger and more childish than

* *Mém. de Mad. d'Aunoy sur Espagne*, II. p. 22, 23.

themselves.* In Brantome's time the Spaniards laid great stress on visible proofs of immaculate chastity; and these proofs they publicly exhibited at the window the day after the nuptials, with this exclamation. "We are satisfied that she was a virgin!†"

Nothing was more gloomy, or formed a more perfect contrast with the condition of the fair sex in the other countries of Europe, than the domestic life of Spanish ladies of distinction. Married ladies of quality were kept more retired in their houses than a Carthusian in his cell.‡ In many convents the nuns were allowed to receive visits from men, as often as they pleased. Married females of rank durst not admit visitors without the permission of their husbands; and when the latter introduced friends and acquaintances to them, they had scarcely the courage to lift up their eyes.§ The visits which they re-

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 211.

† *Dames Galant.* I. p. 94. "Ainsi que l'on fait en Espagne, qui en monstrent publiquement le dit linge par la fenestre, en criant tout haut: *Viergen la tenemos*; nous la tenons pour vierge."

‡ *Letters*, p. 60, 111.

§ *Ibid.* p. 129.---"But she durst not because there were men upon whom she did not so much as lift up her eyes but by stealth."

ceived from female relatives and friends, or paid to them, were rather a fatigue than a pleasure, on account of the parade of dress, and the restraints imposed by etiquette.* Ladies of the highest rank never had the liberty to go abroad into the public walks and places, except in the first year of their marriage with their husbands, in open carriages. After that period this small recreation was denied them. Ladies who were not of the highest rank resorted on certain days to the public walks, but in coaches with the curtains closely drawn; or at most they had small glasses in the sides of the carriages, through which they could see others without been seen themselves.† Married men seldom or never associated with their wives. Every gentleman had besides his wife, a concubine and a mistress, to whom he openly paid court as a lover.‡ With these various connexions it is natural to

*. *Letters*, p. 141. 147.

† *Ibid.* p. 171.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 234. "It seems extraordinary to me, that a lady who loves, and is beloved by a cavallero, is not jealous of his *amancebade*; she looks upon her as a second wife, and believes that she cannot stand in competition with her; so that a man has his wife, his amancebade, and his mistress. The last is generally a person of quality; 'tis she that is visited in the night, and for whom they venture their lives."

suppose that a very small portion of the husband's attention was left for his wife. Even at table, married people, parents and children, never joined to form one cheerful and affectionate circle. The husband sat down by himself at a solitary table, while the wife and children were seated cross-legged, after the Oriental custom, on carpets or cushions spread upon the floor.* The Spanish women were so accustomed to this mode of sitting, that they were less at ease upon a chair, than foreign females, when seated in the Spanish manner upon the floor. The repast was rendered still more cheerless and uncomfortable, by this circumstance, that even persons of the highest distinction had only one, or at most a few very indifferent dishes at their tables; that they seldom or never invited friends to dine with them, or enjoyed the pleasures of conviviality or social converse.† The Spaniards themselves asserted, that they only ate to live, while people of other countries lived only to eat. Intoxication was held during the seventeenth century in such abhorrence, that the accusation could only be expiated

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 129. 243. 221. 230.

† *Ibid.* p. 221.

by the blood of the slanderer; and a man that could be proved to have been but once drunk, was incapacitated for life to appear as a witness in any court of justice.*

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 213. The author of the *Voyage en Espagne, Paris*, 1665, 4to. asserts, that he never saw so many intoxicated women even in Germany as in Spain. I cannot pretend to question the veracity of this traveller, and am therefore at a loss how to reconcile this circumstance with the accounts of other observers, except by the conjecture, that a singular chance caused him to meet with the few intoxicated women which were at that time to be found in the greatest part or Spain. Respecting the manners of the Spaniards and Portuguese, about the middle of the sixteenth century, some highly interesting particulars are contained in the two first letters of the first book of the *Epistolæ Nicolai Clenardi, Antwerp.* 1566, 8vo. p. 10. 18. Those that relate to the multitude of slaves of both sexes, to the indolence of the Spaniards and Portuguese, and the wretched food with which both these people appeased their hunger are particularly worthy of notice. Every species of work or service was considered as disgraceful, and no mistress of a house gave herself the least concern about domestic affairs. "An tu credis, matremfamilias adire forum, emere piscículos, parare holuscúlum? Nihil habet quod usui sit, præter linguam, et quo tuetur nuptiarum titulum. Etiamsi quartam census mei partem largiar, non assequar mulierculam, quæ more nostra mihi curet familiam aut rem domesticam. Quomodo ergo, ais, istic vivitis? Mancipiorum plena sunt omnia."---A beggarly Hidalgo, who had no food all the week but bread, garlic and water, and fasted on Sunday, because there was no garlic in the market, was attended, when he went abroad, by several servants. "Cum enim sic quotidie scriptum esset, (that is in the housekeeping account-book of a Portuguese) in aquam quator sectilia, in panem duo regalia, in raphanum sesqui regale, et ita tota hebdomada tam magnificis

The only, or at least the ordinary occupations of the Spanish ladies were, embroidery, the society and conversation of their female attendants, and of their dwarfs of both sexes, and lastly of their devotions, the chief of which was the telling of their beads.* Rosaries were not only instruments of prayer for all Spanish women, but indispensable play-things both at home and abroad. Whether they were seated at the gaming-table, conversing with their lovers, or speaking evil of their neighbours, still they had their beads continually in their hands. They read little, and wrote still less.† So much the greater was the astonishment of foreigners of both sexes, that the Spanish ladies spoke and wrote with such elegance. Even French women at the period when they regarded the court of their king as the only seat of good taste and politeness, acknowledged that no country in the world produced females possessing more good sense, more

impensis decurrerret, fratus aliquanto lautiorem futurum diem dominicum, sic scriptum reperit, hodie nihil quia in foro non erant raphani. Ejusmodi fastuosos *raphanophagous* multos hic reperias, et tamen plures secum trahunt famulos quam domi consumant regalia."

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 137, 138.

† *Ibid.* p. 144.

vivacity and greater talents for pleasing than Spain.*

The restraints imposed on the Spanish ladies increased in proportion to their rank and birth, and were consequently most oppressive for the queens. Young queens were treated by their first ladies of honour not merely as children by their governesses, but as prisoners by their goalers. From this severity they were very seldom skreened even by the most ardent affection of their husbands; for the first *dames d'honneur* sought to insinuate themselves into the good graces of the sovereign, by keeping a watchful eye over the queen, and actually gained their end. The duchess de Terra Nova, *camerara major* to the first consort of Charles II. would not permit Madame de Villars, the wife of the French ambassador, or other ladies whom the queen was desirous of seeing, to visit her. She would not suffer the queen to look out of the windows of her apartments, which opened into the solitary garden of a convent. She even gave notice, in an ungracious manner to foreign travellers,

* *D'Aunoy's Mem.* I. p. 115. "A l'égard des dames, je dirai en general qu'il n'y a point de lieu au monde, ou elles ayent plus d'esprit, de vivacité et de talent pour plaire qu'en Espagne."

that when the king rode by they should not place themselves on the side where the queen sat, or look at her majesty. Nay, she had even the audacity to wring off the heads of some young parrots with with which the queen was fond of amusing herself.* This malicious interruption of her innocent pleasures the queen repaid with two smart boxes on the ear, the next time the duchess was going to kiss the hand of her mistress, who alleged as a pretext for this correction, a fit of that kind of longing to which pregnant women are subject.† This artful excuse of the young queen completely silenced the camerara major, for it was customary in Spain to treat all pregnant women with the greatest respect and complaisance, and to allow them their humour in every thing.‡ Other Spanish ladies might laugh as much as they pleased at the tricks of their dwarfs and fools; to the queens alone this liberty was denied.

When the second wife of Philip IV. once burst out at table into a loud laugh at the ludicrous gestures and antics of a

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 279. 282. *Mémoir.* I. p. 141. 144. 168. II. p. 25. 32. 40.

† *Ibid.* II. p. 32.

‡ *Letters*, p. 153.

buffoon, she was reminded that a queen of Spain ought not to laugh aloud. The queen answered, that unless the buffoon were sent away, she must be allowed to laugh at his drolleries.* The ladies of the Spanish court were at liberty to listen in the presence of the king and queen to the most impassioned declarations of their admirers. The most respectful gallantry to queens was punished with poison and the poniard. The queens of Spain durst not even converse with foreign princes, who came to court the hands of infantas, without interpreters, or in any other language than Spanish. Charles I. of England, while Prince of Wales, visited Spain, to procure an infanta in marriage. During his residence at the Spanish court, he long sought an opportunity of conversing with the beautiful queen Elizabeth, in her native language, which was French. This opportunity he at last found. The queen replied in a low tone, that she durst not speak to him in that language, but would ask permission. This was granted, and she had one conversation with the English prince. After this interview the illustrious stranger received a

* *Voyage d'Espagne*, p. 32, 33.

caution not to converse any more with her majesty, because it was customary in Spain to poison the lovers of queens.* The duke de Villa Medina, who had manifested his love for the queen, after the Spanish manner, was dispatched for this boldness, by the pistol of an assassin.†

By the seclusion of their wives, the Spaniards were as unable as the Orientals to prevent what husbands most dread. The artifices of love triumphed over all the precautions of jealousy, and its power broke all the bolts and bars with which the latter attempted to confine it. Bold lovers climbed the highest walls with imminent hazard of their lives, to enjoy the embrace of their mistresses, who sometimes made their daring gallants happy by the side of their sleeping husbands.‡ Younger lovers assumed female apparel, affected pregnancy and the longing peculiar to that state, in order to obtain an interview with the ladies to whom they were attached.§ When ladies found it

* *Motteville, Mémoires*, I. p. 291.

† *Voyage en Espagne*, p. 43. *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 88, &c.

‡ *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 231.

§ *Ibid.* p. 153.

dangerous to receive visits at home, they disguised themselves, and sought their lovers, or at least amorous adventures in the public walks.* The most common way in which the Spanish ladies eluded the Argus-eyes of the men, and the vigilance of the duennas, or female guardians of their chastity, was by paying visits to relatives or friends of their own sex. At the houses of the latter they changed their dress, and went out by a back door to join their gallants.† The Spanish ladies made it a point of honour to keep each other's secrets inviolably; and whatever enmity might exist between faithless wives, they never betrayed the love-secrets with which they were entrusted. Finally, such ladies as had either no opportunity or inclination to employ any of the above expedients, availed themselves of the liberty they enjoyed, during Passion week, to make amends for the restraint and confinement of the whole year. They went to certain churches, and contrived in the crowd to lose their duennas, and to withdraw to some adjoining house, hired by their lover for the purpose, and which they knew by

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 111, 171.

† *Ibid.* p. 232, 3.

a private sign. Having gratified the desires which they had cherished for a year together, they would return to the church, and severely reprimand their duennas for their carelessness in losing them.* Where the interviews of lovers are so rare, so difficult, and so dangerous as in Spain, there the way to the highest bliss of love is much more chaste than in other countries. Spanish ladies of the highest rank were so far from being offended with a *cavallero*, who might happen to be alone with them, if, during the first half hour he asked the highest favour they could grant, that, in the contrary case, they concluded he despised them, and could have resented his forbearance so highly as to stab him.† The same cause very often obliged females to make the first declaration of their love. When, however, a step of this kind came to the knowledge of their fathers and brothers, they never failed to put to death their daughters and sisters, with the same

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 155.

† *Ibid* p. 234. "The Marchioness d'Alcannizas, one of the greatest and most virtuous ladies of the court, very freely said to us, 'I must needs confess, that if a *cavallero* should be conveniently alone with me half an hour, and did not ask me all that a man could ask, I should resent it so briskly that I would stab him if I could'."

unrelenting cruelty as injured husbands would dispatch their faithless wives.*

Though the Spaniards confined their wives with almost as much rigour, and caused them to be watched as strictly as the Orientals, yet they were advantageously distinguished in various respects from the latter. Instead of despising them as impure, they paid them honours little short of divine; they courted the favour of their mistresses, declared their love, and showed their affection in a very different manner.

Among all the European nations it was deemed a great crime to begin a quarrel in the presence of ladies of rank and distinction. In Spain, the first nobles incurred the penalty of death, if they only engaged in altercations, or uttered menaces in the presence of queens and infantas.† In other countries of Europe, it was customary to kneel when persons attending on queens or princesses presented any thing to them. In Spain a man never presented any thing to a lady, or received any thing from her hand, without kneeling respectfully.‡ The French women

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 203.
† *Brantome Dames Gal.* II. p. 400.
‡ *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 163.

themselves were obliged to confess that the behaviour of the Spaniards to females was infinitely more respectful than that of their countrymen, and that they made incomparably greater sacrifices to manifest their regard for the ladies. If a lady praised any thing belonging to a gentleman, this was sufficient to induce the possessor to lay the object, whatever it might be, at the feet of the fair one by whom it had been commended. Madame d'Aunoy once praised a set of six fine cream-coloured horses that belonged to the son of the duke of Alva. The young cavalier immediately ordered the horses to be conducted to the stable of the fair foreigner; and Madame d'Aunoy had very great difficulty to decline the generosity of the noble Spaniard.*

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 136. A much less commendable custom in Spain was, that if a person gave another any thing to look at, he might keep it if he kissed the hand of him or her from whom he received it. In this manner Madame d'Aunoy was robbed by her banker of a gold repeater, for which she had paid fifty louis. *Ibid.* p. 7. The rude manner in which the wife of the constable de Colonna was taken into custody in the house of her husband, was by no means Spanish. When the persons who came to apprehend her, were going to tie her hands like a criminal, she resisted this indignity, on which they dragged her away half naked by the hair. *Mémoires de d'Aunoy*, II. p. 134.

The submission and respect of the Spaniards for the fair sex were particularly displayed in the manner in which they courted the favour of their mistresses, and made them acquainted with their passion. A Spanish lover devoted himself with soul and body to his charmer, or at least dedicated to her the whole of his time. He passed the nights under her windows, where he was frequently covered from head to foot with the most disgusting filth; and during the day he walked to and fro' before her house, to have an opportunity of seeing her at her window, or of attending her when she went abroad, either to church or to visit her friends. Females were often so closely watched, that their admirers could never find an occasion to make a verbal declaration of their passion. In such cases they had recourse to the silent language of signs and gestures, which children of both sexes learned at an early age, as they did their mother tongue.* Instances were not rare in Spain, of persons who had been mutually in love for several years, without ever having spoken to each other.† When lovers were not so fortunate as to

* *D'Aunoy's Letters,* p. 237

† *Ibid.* p. 211.

meet with their mistresses in their solitary excursions, they watched for every opportunity of seeing them at church or in their walks. In the time of Charles II. the *Guaps*, or gallants by profession, who were distinguished by wearing a piece of crape round ther hats, were accustomed to range themselves round the vessel for holy water, and to present some of the water to all the ladies.* The papal nuncio prohibited this practice on pain of excommunication, at the intreaty, as it was believed, of some jealous husbands. These gallants, at night repaired to the *Prado*, went up to the coaches in which they observed women, and either threw flowers, or sprinkled them with scented waters. Such of the fair riders as had careless duennas, sometimes rewarded this gallantry, by taking them into their coaches to converse with them.† On the entry of ambassadors, or of persons belonging to the royal family, the cavaliers placed their coaches as near as possible to the windows or balconies of their ladies, that if they could not converse by word of mouth, they might at least discourse with them by their eyes and their

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 152. Respecting the *Guaps*, see *Mém.* I. p. 115, 116.

† *Ibid* p. 172.

fingers.* In religious processions, lovers presented themselves before the windows of their mistresses, and scourged themselves with excessive severity. The ladies by signs encouraged them to persevere in this pious work; and it was esteemed a particular civility, when these disciplinarians met a handsome woman, to make their blood fly upon her.† The greatest and most dangerous proof of love for a man, was to fight a wild bull in honour of his mistress.‡ Cavaliers begged permission of their ladies to engage in these fights. During the conflict, the ladies waved their handkerchiefs in token of approbation; and when the cavaliers had vanquished their antagonists, they made a low obeisance to the objects of their passion, and kissed their swords with which they had killed, or mortally wounded the bulls. These fights in honour of their ladies, cost many a Spanish gentleman his life. A few years before Madame d'Aunoy visited Spain, a young cavalier heard that some of the most ferocious bulls of the mountains were taken, and were kept for an approaching fight. This intelligence inspir-

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 237.
† *Ibid.* p. 156.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 186, 189.

ed the intrepid youth with the wish to acquire honour for himself and his fair bride, in an engagement with one of these formidable animals. He acquainted his mistress with his design; and she, by the most affecting intreaties endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose. All her prayers and all her remonstrances were in vain. Athirst for glory, the lover entered the lists, with others of his own rank and age, and engaged one of the first and largest bulls that was let loose. The fight had scarcely begun, when a stranger, in the dress of a peasant, advanced, and with a dart gave the bull a painful wound. Quitting his first antagonist, the furious animal rushed upon his new adversary, whom he immediately extended with a mortal blow upon the ground. In falling, the long and beautiful hair of the youth was exposed by the loss of his cap; and it appeared that the uninvited enemy of the wounded bull was a young female, and the bride of the cavalier who had determined to fight in honour of her. The bridegroom rendered desperate by this spectacle, defended his mistress, bathed in her blood, with astonishing heroism. He likewise received several mortal wounds. The unfortunate lovers were placed in the

same chamber, where, at their request the nuptial ceremony was performed, and in a few hours they both expired.

In the same degree as the gallantry of the Spaniards in general differed from that of the other European nations, did the courtesy of the gentlemen and ladies of the court differ from the gallantry of the other Spaniards. The expressions of this love or courtesy were as involuntary as every thing else that was done at the court of Spain. The rules of the court, which were drawn up by Philip II. and prescribed with the utmost precision, the mode of life of the Spanish kings and queens, the times of their diversions, their repasts, their repose, nay, even the dress in which his majesty was to pay nocturnal visits to the queen,* those same rules

* *Mémoir. de Mad. d'Aunoy*, II. p. 218. *Letters*, p. 282. "It is thus noted in the orders, that when the king comes out of his own chamber in the night, to go into the queen's, he must wear his shoes like slippers, his black cloak upon his shoulders, his *broquel* or buckler fastened under his arm, and his bottle, fastened by a string, to the other. But you must not think this bottle holds drink to quench thirst; it is for a quite contrary purpose, which you must guess. With all this accoutrement, the king has besides, a long rapier in one hand, and a dark lanthorn in the other, and in this manner he is obliged to go all alone into the queen's chamber." The same writer informs us, that, according to the above-mentioned orders, the queen of Spain was forced to go to bed at ten o'clock in summer,

likewise prescribed how ladies and gentlemen ought to love, how the latter ought to pay their homage, and in what manner the former should receive it. The ladies of honour, who were appointed to attend on the queens, and resided in the palace, were all widows or maids.* These ladies were, if possible, more strictly watched than the other Spanish ladies of quality, being under the superintendence not only of *duennas*, but also of *guardadamas*, who supply the place of the eunuchs of the Orientals.† Notwithstanding this rigid etiquette, each of the ladies of honour was permitted publicly to acknowledge one or more cavaliers as her gallants; and every Spanish gentleman, even though married, or advanced in years, might openly pay

and at nine in winter. She adds, that the consort of Charles II. on her first arrival in Spain, "did not consider the appointed hour. It seemed to her reasonable, that the rule of going to bed should be when one is sleepy; but it frequently happened that, as she was eating her supper, some of her women, without saying a word to her, would begin to undress her head, and others to pull off her shoes under the table, and so hurry her to bed with that haste as made her very much wonder."

* See the accounts of Madame de Motteville and her brother, in her *Mémoires*, V. p. 51, &c. *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 284, 5. *Mémoir.* I. p. 47. Also, the fragments of the *Lettres de Mad. de Villars*, in the *Hist. litter. de Femmes Franç.* I. p. 545, &c.

† *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 181.

his court to one of these ladies, as her professed admirer, if she chose to accept his addresses.* The ladies of the palace durst not appear in public, except on grand gala-days, when the queen exhibited herself by the side of the king, before the whole court; or in processions, when gallants were allowed to converse with their mistresses.† During the greatest part of the year, the gallants of the ladies of the palace never beheld the objects of their passion, except at the window, or behind the lattices, and never conversed with them but by the language of the fingers and of gestures.‡ The Spaniards likewise introduced this species of gallantry at Brussels, where the duke of Orleans, and the French gentlemen who accompanied him, waited on the ladies of the court under their windows, where it was extremely difficult to con-

* This licensed and public courtesy, was called in Spanish, *galanteas*. *D'Aunoy*, I. p. 47. "Elle lui permit de la *galantear*. C'est le terme usité à servir une dame du palais; et c'est une chose si commune, qu'encore qu'un homme soit marié, il ne laisse pas de rendre publiquement à sa maitresse les mêmes soins, que l'on rend a celle dont on veut faire sa femme." II. p. 119. "J'ai vu des gens mariés, et meme de grands-peres, qui n'etoient occupez que de l'amour d'une dame du palais."

† "Ce qu'ils appellent *dar lugar*." *Mad. de Villars*, in the *Hist. litter. de Femmes Franç.* I. p. 552.

‡ *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 284.

verse with them.* When strangers of great distinction came to the Spanish court, and did not stay long enough to see the ladies of the palace assembled on a day of public audience, the ladies obtained permission of the king to receive the visitors in an anti-chamber of the palace, and there to enjoy their company for a few hours.† On gala-days, the *galanteos de palacio* conversed in the presence of the king and queen, with the mistresses whom they adored; and each lady had the liberty to be attended by two admirers, who were allowed to be covered like the grandees, in the presence of the sovereign. They assigned as a reason for this liberty, that the *galanteos* were so fascinated by the charms of their ladies, as to be unconscious where they were, or what they were doing; on which account they received the appellation of *embevicidos*, or persons intoxicated with love.‡ It was necessary

* *Mém. du Duc d'Orleans*, p. 157.---" mais c'etoit à l'Espagnole, ne se voyant que par une jalousie fort haute d'où il etoit très difficile de se faire entendre."

† Marshal de Bassompierre experienced this honour. *Mém.* II. p. 9, 16.

‡ *Motteville*, V. p. 51. " The reason assigned for this is,' that they were deemed *embevicidos*, so absorbed in the charms of their ladies, so intoxicated and fascinated with them, as not to observe any thing that is passing around them."

that every one who courted the favour of a lady of the palace, should be distinguished by superior wit, refined gallantry, and elegant language, as a peculiar species of each of those accomplishments prevailed at court, and was learned like an art or trade.* When the queen went abroad, or travelled to any of the different palaces, the *galanteos de palacio* who had obtained permission, accompanied their mistresses sometimes on horseback, sometimes on foot, and very frequently in the apparel of mule-drivers, or of other low characters, to prevent their being known.† Gentlemen of the highest distinction were not deterred either by the filthy streets of the capital, or by the wretched roads to the palaces, from attending their mistresses; and if the latter had surly *duennas* or *guardadamas*, the cavaliers had the mortification of seeing the curtains of their carriages drawn close,

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 114. "One must have a certain peculiar sort of wit that is neat and refined; he must have choice phrases and expressions, and some ways and modes not common. He must understand how to write both in prose and verse, and that too, better than another." And, again, p. 184. "In the palace there reigns a certain genius and strain of wit, quite different from that of the city, and so peculiar that one must learn it as they do an art or a trade."

† *Mém. de Mad. d'Aunoy*, II. p. 119, 120.

and of being themselves told, that the most respectful love is the most discreet. In these cases, the disconsolate gallants were forced to be content to speak with their languishing eyes, or to sigh so loud that they might be heard at a considerable distance.* Many cavaliers ruined themselves by the valuable presents which they made to their mistresses; a gallantry which, as Madame d'Aunoy assures us, first commenced in her time.† It was a much more ancient practice to give extravagant presents to the surgeons who had bled any of these ladies, and who had procured for her admirer a fillet, or a cloth on which any of the blood of the fair one had fallen.‡ A cavalier, in attending a lady, durst not offer her his arm, or lay hold of hers. The Spaniards wrapped up their arms in their cloaks, and presented the ladies their elbows by which to support themselves.§ Favoured lovers never kissed their mistresses. The greatest caress of the Spaniards was to clasp with their hands and gently press the arms of their fair ones;‖

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 181.
† *Mémoires*, II. p. 118, 119.
‡ *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 285.
§ *Ibid.* p. 277.
‖ *Mém. de d'Aunoy*, II. p. 25.

as one of the greatest gallantries consisted in holding a handkerchief to the mouth, the eyes and the heart.* From all that I have said, who would not be struck with astonishment to be informed, that the venereal disease was universally spread among all ranks, sexes and ages in Spain; that this odious malady was very often the nuptial present which a Spaniard made to his wife; that men and women, high as well as low, spoke of it as they would of a fever, or any other distemper, that had befallen them without any fault of their own.†

One of the most celebrated models of Spanish gallantry was the handsome, the accomplished and the valiant duke de Villa Medina, who not only paid court to queen Elizabeth, the consort of Philip IV. but was really enamored of her. In order to acquaint his illustrious mistress with the sentiments of his heart, he one day went up in the presence of the queen to an altar, upon which had been laid abundant offerings for the souls in purgatory, and said, "My love will last for ever, and

* *Mém. de d'Aunoy.* I. p. 162. "Le roi prenant son mouchoir dans sa main, le porta plusieurs fois à sa bouche, à ses yeux et à son cœur, ce qui est fort grande galanterie en Espagne."

† *D'Aunoy's Letters,* p. 209.

my pains will likewise be eternal. The torments of the souls in purgatory will have an end, but mine will never cease. The hope of seeing the termination of their sufferings comforts them; as for me, I am without hope or comfort, so that these charities ought rather to be given for me than for the departed souls."—Not long afterwards he appeared at a carousal in a suit embroidered with new reals, and had for a device these words: *Mis amores son reales.* * About the same time he wrote a comedy, which obtained such universal applause, that at the first representation of it on the king's birth-day, the queen determined to act a part in it herself. In the performance of the piece, the part of the queen required that she should be concealed in a machine representing a cloud. The enamored duke stood near the cloud, and by a pre-concerted signal, one of his trusty servants set fire to the linen-work of the machine, as if by accident. The flames spread with rapidity, and seemed to threaten the life of the queen. The duke de Villa Medina, without a moment's

* These equivocal words may either signify, My love is reals, or money; or, my love is royal.

delay, took his sovereign in his arms and carried her out of the burning theatre, to a place where she was safe from the conflagration. It was asserted, that, by the way, the duke stole some favours of the queen, and in particular that he touched her foot. This was mentioned to the king by the duke de Olivarez, and Philip was so enraged, that he caused the duke de Villa Medina to be assassinated.*

The Spanish cavaliers very often affected a romantic passion for ladies to whom they were perhaps utter strangers, whom they had no intention to inspire with real love, and of whom they expected no serious reciprocal affection. To this parade of love they frequently sacrificed a great portion of their fortune. It is natural to imagine that these sacrifices were infinitely greater when the passion was real; for the Spaniards love with much greater ardour, fidelity, and constancy than other Europeans. Spaniards of distinction were so far from being offended, if the objects of their affection refused their addresses, that when the pangs of hopeless love had reduced them to the brink of the grave, they would

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 87,88.

present their whole property to their inexorable mistresses, to make the latter so much the more comfortable and happy. * Spanish females abandoned their parents, their relatives, and native land to seek their lovers, who had fallen into the hands of the Turks in Africa, to release them if possible from slavery, or at least to sooth the rigour of their lot.† The attachment of Spanish ladies sustained no diminution, either from the absence of their lovers, or from the greatest vicissitudes of fortune. ‡ If they were once in love, their whole hearts and souls were occupied with the objects of their passion, and all the rest of the world was perfectly indifferent to them. § Commensurate with this excessive love were their jealousy and revenge, when they violated the fidelity sworn to them; husbands and lovers put to death their wives and their mistresses, and mistresses dispatched their lovers without feeling and remorse. ‖

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 69, &c.

† *Ibid.* p. 74, &c.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 93.

§ *Ibid.* p. 231. "These ladies never desire to oblige any other than their gallant. They are entirely taken up with him," &c.

‖ *Ibid.* p. 205. 222. During the time that Madame d'Aunoy was in Spain, a lady of quality, whose gallant

The confinement of females of character was productive of the same consequences in Spain, as in ancient Greece, and among the Orientals: public courtezans were not only tolerated, but even protected by the government. * Even these courtezans required inviolable constancy of their gallants while they continued to visit them; and if they discovered that they went to other females of the same description, they openly abused them, both in word and deed. Spaniards of the highest rank practised the same insensate profusion for the sake of beautiful and celebrated courtezans, as for the most distinguished ladies of the palace. †

had been inconstant to her, enticed him into a house where she was mistress. After she had reproached her perfidious lover with his infidelity, with all the violence of offended passion, she offered him a poniard and a cup of poisoned chocolate, leaving him the liberty of chusing which he would take. The gallant drank the chocolate without hesitation, well knowing that all intreaties would be in vain. After he had swallowed the poison he merely complained of its bitterness, and advised her to put a little more sugar in the next potion of the kind that she prepared. The poison was so strong that he soon fell into convulsions, which lasted about an hour, and the lady did not stir from her lover, to whom she was still passionately attached, until he had expired.

* *Voy. en Espagne*, p. 46. 132, 133. *d'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 113. 222.

† *Ibid.*

When the kings of Spain visited a courtezan, or any other mistress, they paid, according to the etiquette of the court, no more than four pistoles each time.* This sum was accordingly once given by Philip IV. to one of the most famous courtezans, who had been accustomed to sell her favours for many hundreds, nay, thousands of doubloons. Offended at the low price which the king had set upon the enjoyment of her charms, she resolved to take a revenge proportionate to the affront. Assuming the dress of a man, she went to see the king. After she had made herself known, and had a most particular audience of him, she took out a purse of four hundred pistoles, and threw it upon the table, saying, "It is thus that I pay my mistresses,"—calling the king her mistress, because she had come to visit him in masculine attire.

The dress and ornaments of the Spanish ladies were as original and as little subject to variation as their way of life, their gallantry, and manner of loving. Women, both high and low, daubed themselves so immoderately with red and white paint as to excite disgust in foreigners, who were

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 283.

not accustomed to the sight.* They laid the rouge not only upon their cheeks, but likewise on their upper lips, their ears, their hands and fingers, their foreheads and shoulders; and made themselves eye-brows, which resembled a fine thread of hair.† The quantity of paint with which they besmeared the whole face, was supposed to be the reason why the Spanish ladies did not kiss in saluting, as the lips of the one would have been painted, and the beauty of the other impaired. ‡ Elderly ladies wore black or grey upper garments: but those of younger females were of white or coloured satin, or taffeta. These garments fitted close to the upper half of the body, and were frequently buttoned with precious stones of considerable value.§ The bosom and the fore-part of the neck were generally covered; but behind, their clothes were so cut away, as to expose the shoulders down to the middle of the back.‖ The upper

* *Voyage en Espagne*, p. 48. 90. *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 140, &c.

† *Letters*, p. 125. 145.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 143.

§ *Ibid.* p. 138.

‖ *Ibid.*

garments had narrow sleeves, with large wings about the shoulders, and were so long before and on the sides as not merely to cover, but to envelop their feet; and the Spanish women were from their infancy accustomed to tread upon their garments without throwing themselves down. * Over the upper garments they wore a kind of mantle which reached to the knees; and this mantle was designed, as they pretended, to make the rest of their dress last the longer. They knew not that this species of pallium was borrowed from the Moorish ladies. In more ancient times it was customary to wear hoops of prodigious size, both at home and abroad; but the use of these was discontinued during the reign of Charles II. except at court and on other particular occasions. At other times the women were content with smaller fardingales, which were lighter to carry and less inconvenient for sitting. † Under the upper garments, the Spanish ladies wore, in winter, at least ten or twelve, and in summer, seven or eight others; and Madame d'Aunoy could not conceive how

* *Letters*, p. 138.

† *Ibid.*

such little creatures as the Spanish women could support so great a load.* These numerous under-garments were all of the richest and heaviest stuffs, of velvet, or thick satin, trimmed with gold and silver lace. Under all the rest they wore a garment made either of fine English lace, or of muslin embroidered with gold, and so wide as to be not less than four ells in compass. These *sabenguas*, as they were called, sometimes cost five or six hundred crowns. People of quality, of both sexes, wore very fine linen; but as this was both scarce and dear, they had very little change, and wore their shirts or shifts for a considerable time, so that in France, the linen of the ladies and gentlemen of the Spanish court, was thought extremely filthy and disgusting.† Even persons of rank had but one shirt or chemise, and were, therefore obliged to lie in bed while it was washed and dried. An essential part of the dress of Spanish ladies was long wide sleeves, with ruffles of broad lace, fastened just above the hand. ‡

* *Letters*, p. 139.

† *Ibid.* p. 141. *Motteville*, V. p. 88.

‡ *Ibid.* as above.

The ornaments of the Spanish ladies were as heavy as their dress. Their girdles exhibited a strange assemblage of medals and relics; and many churches had not such a store of the latter, as one single lady would wear at her girdle. None of them was without the cord of some ecclesiastical order; which was made either of black, white or brown worsted, and hung down before. Madame de Villars once observed the daughter of the duke of Alva with a pistol suspended from a broad ribbon at her side. * The Spanish ladies were not content with one set of jewels, but had eight or ten, of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls, or turquoises. The jewellers, however, set them very ill, the greatest part of the stones being covered with the gold in which they were enchased. If any one took notice of this, the Spanish ladies would reply, that to them the gold looked as well as the stones.† Necklaces of stones or pearls were unknown in Spain; but so much the more common and heavy were rings, bracelets, pendants, and hair-pins, of pearls and precious stones. From a

* *Hist. litter des Femmes Franç.* I. p. 554.

† *Letters*, p. 140.

broad knot of diamonds at the breast, hung either a chain of pearls or a dozen small knots of diamonds, the ends of which were fastened on one side.* The pendants were as long as a person's hand, and so heavy that it was a wonder they did not tear out the holes of the ears. Some even had large watches, others padlocks of precious stones, finely-wrought English keys, or little bells suspended from them.† Their hair was stuck full of bodkins, made of all kinds of precious stones, some in the shape of flies, and others of butterflies. In the fashion of dressing their hair there was as great a variety as in their apparel and the forms of their ornaments. All the ladies wore wigs or tresses of false hair, which covered their own hair.‡ They parted their hair on the sides, and twisted it in the front of the head, so as to form a large tuft, and to leave the forehead entirely bare. The rest of the hair was made up into several tresses, and these were fastened with ribbons to their heads.

* *Lettres*, p. 141.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Motteville*, I. p. 87. 89. *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 83. 141.

The Spanish ribbons were not handsome; but so much the more beautiful were the feathers, which were spotted with different colours.* Much, however, as Madame d'Aunoy admired the beauty of these feathers, she was far from being pleased with the manner in which the Spanish ladies dressed their hair with them, because in France it was customary to adorn the heads of none but little children with feathers. The bride of Louis XIV. on the day of her nuptials wore a white cap, which quite covered her beautiful hair.† Twenty years later, the Spanish ladies had neither night nor day such head-dresses as the women of France were accustomed to wear; except that elderly females threw over them a covering of black gauze or lace, and the ladies of the palace put on large hats when they went abroad.‡ No Spanish lady was full-dressed without a large pair of spectacles and high pattens. The more distinguished was the rank of persons of both

* Madame D'Aunoy could not imagine why these variegated feathers were not made in France.

† *Motteville*, V. p 89 "Her beautiful hair was covered with a kind of white cap, which rather tended to disfigure than adorn to her."

‡ *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 82. *Mém.* I. p. 160.

sexes, so much the larger were the dimensions of their spectacles; and these spectacles, which in their opinion made them look more grave, were worn by many all day long till they went to bed,* The pattens were a kind of sandal made of gold-brocade or velvet, with gold heels or rather stilts, which raised them half a foot or more. † In these pattens they walked so very unsafely, that, they were obliged to support themselves on two *meninos*, or young ladies. The common shoes of the Spanish women had no heels, and in these they walked or rather glided along with such ease and agility, that Madame d'Aunoy was of opinion, that French women could not learn their way of walking in a hundred years. Even at the time of Madame d'Aunoy, the garments of the Spanish ladies were every where covered with *Agnus Dei's*, or little images.‡ Excepting the few alterations mentioned above, the dress, ornaments, and attire of the ladies in Spain were the same as Madame d'Aunoy describes them, a century before her visit to that coun-

* *Letters*, p. 145, 146.

† *Ibid.* p. 82 139. *Mém.* II. p. 23.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 141.

try.* The same was the case with respect to mourning, which in the opinion of the French women disfigured even the most beautiful females.† This dress consisted of a robe of black serge, over which was a linen surplice that reached down to the knees. The head was covered with a white veil that descended very low behind. Over the veil was worn a large mantle of black taffeta, which reached to the heels; and in travelling this mantle was held fast by a broad-brimmed hat tied under the chin with silken twist.‡

A necessary part of the toilette of the Spanish ladies consisted in being perfumed by their women with costly pastils, and in having scented waters sprinkled over their face, and the other parts of their body, by one of their oldest female

* *Letters*, p. 82.

† *Ibid.* p. 59.

‡ The mourning of Spanish widows lasted two years. The first years they passed in chambers hung with black, from which the light of day was carefully excluded. They then removed into an apartment hung with grey. They were allowed to have no pictures, or any other costly furniture; neither durst they wear any diamonds or coloured stuffs. *Letters*, p. 59. The dress of the men under Charles II. was the same as it had been in the time of Charles V. *Motteville*, V. 91, 92. *D'Aunoy's Mémoir.* I. p. 113, 116.

attendants. It was thought that orange-flower water acquired a superior smell, when an old woman spurted it between her teeth upon her mistress.* This disgusting custom, derived from the Moors,† appeared to foreigners not more extraordinary than another practice of like origin. When Spanish ladies of quality were visiting their acquaintance, and had eaten till they were ready to burst, of dry sweetmeats, they would sometimes fill five or six handkerchiefs with the remainder, tie these bundles to the hoops of their fardingales, and thus carry them home.‡ Still more singular was the caprice of the ladies of Bayonne, who carried in their arms little sucking pigs, adorned with collars of ribbons, as the women of other

* *D'Aunoy's Letters*, p. 126.

† This practice is of much more ancient date than the author seems to have suspected. From various passages in the writers of antiquity, especially in Cicero's Epistles, we find that it was customary among the Romans for female slaves to besprinkle the hair of their mistresses with costly essences and perfumes in the very same manner. The Spaniards might, no doubt, have borrowed this disgusting custom, as the author justly denominates it, from the Moors, but it is more than probable that these people themselves learned it from the Romans or their neighbours the Greeks. *(Translator.)*

‡ *Letters*, p. 147.

countries carry their lap-dogs. The fair of Bayonne could not part from their favourites even when they were going to a ball. When they danced, they were, however, obliged to set them down, and then the little animals galloped grunting about the room, where they more frequently interrupted the dancers by running between their legs, than the music by their cries. *

* *Letters*, p. 2 The French spoken by the ladies of Bayonne, in 1679, was so bad that Madame D'Aunoy could not understand it.

CHAPTER II.

On the State of the Female Sex among the other civilized Nations of Europe, from the beginning of the Sixteenth to the middle of the Seventeenth Century.

THE want of information prevents us from treating of the state of the females of Italy, Germany, England, Holland, and Switzerland, and their relations to the other sex, during the sixteenth, and the first half of the seventeenth century, so fully as concerning the condition of the women of France and Spain. Upon the whole, however, it may be assumed that the fair females of Italy approached nearest to those of Spain, and that the women of the civilized countries in the North of Europe more closely resembled the French.

The Italian women of the sixteenth century were almost as rigidly confined as the Spanish. Young unmarried ladies enjoyed less liberty than married women of distinction. The former were kept so

close that even the sons of princes were not allowed access to them;* and it was considered as an extraordinary circumstance, when young females of respectable families were permitted to appear in public once a year, at the great festival of the city or place in which they resided. †

Among the married women those who belonged to some court were less circumscribed, or at least had more frequent opportunities of appearing in public on gala-days, at balls and entertainments, than the others. They had permission, on all civil and religious festivals to shew themselves at their balconies, to go to church and to the theatre, and to ride out in their coaches. On all these occasions the Italian ladies were never accompanied by men.‡ The sexes never intermingled, except on gala-days, balls, and magnificent entertainments at courts. Even at such times the intercourse between the ladies

* *Nouvelles de la Reine de Navarre*, III. p. 43.--- "N'ayant pas la liberté de lui parler, à cause de la bizarrerie de la coutume du pays."

† *Voyage de Montaigne*, p. 219.---"Ce jour là, tout se montre en public, jusqu'aux jeunes filles."

‡ *Montaigne*, p. 141.--- "Partout où elles se laissent voir en public, soit en coche, en feste, ou en theatre, elles sont à part des hommes."

and gentlemen would seem to have been scarcely so free as in Spain. Lord Cherbury, at least, mentions as a particular favour, that the duke of Savoy presented him to some fair lady, whenever he went to court.* The commerce between the sexes was most unreserved at balls, for several of the Italian dances were thought free by the French themselves.† At splendid banquets the ladies were waited upon by their husbands, who stood behind their chairs and handed them drink or whatever else they wanted.‡ From this attendance of husbands upon their wives we may infer, that cicisbeism was still unknown in Italy towards the conclusion of the sixteenth century. Princes ate at the same table with their consorts, relinquishing to them the place of honour.§ Princesses requested strangers of

* *Life of Lord Cherbury*, p. 109. "A great favour among the Italians."

† *Montaigne*, p. 141. "Toutesfois elles ont des danses entrelassées assés libremant, où il y a occasion de deviser, et de toucher à la main."

‡ *Ibid.* p. 142. "Au souper les dames sont servies de leur maris qui sont debout autour d'elles, et leur donnent à boire et ce qu elles demandent." At the same place we find a curious account of the cookery of the Italians and the regulations of magnificent tables at that period.

§ *Ibid.* p. 111. "Sa femme (the grand-duchess of Florence,) estoit assise au lieu d'honneur; le duc au dessous; au dessous du duc la belle seur de la duchesse; au dessou de cette-cy, le frere de la duchesse."

distinction to conduct and accompany them in a walk into the garden.*

If the information of a French writer be correct, the women of Italy, in the middle of the seventeenth century, enjoyed still less liberty than those of Spain to pay visits without their husbands. The ladies of Rome waited upon queen Christina of Sweden, on her arrival in that city, and this attendance was deemed a relaxation of the severity of ancient custom.† The courtesy shewn by the marquise du Guast to the *Grand-Prieur de France*, of the house of Lorraine and his attendants, at Naples was a still greater deviation from the rigid practice of former times. No sooner was she informed of the arrival of the prince, than she sent to inform him, that nothing but her sex and the custom of the country prevented her from paying her respects to him. On receiving this compliment, the prince with a retinue of two hundred gentlemen and officers of

* The grand duchess of Florence, mother of queen Mary de Medicis, requested the marshal de Bassompierre to conduct her into the garden. During this walk the marshal and his attendants met the princess Mary, to whom they were likewise presented. *Mém. de Bassomp.* I. p. 36.

† *Galant. des Rois de France*, p. 226. "Ayant un peu relaché en sa faveur de la severité qu'on a accoutumé de pratiquer en Italie."

state immediately waited on the marquise. She had not only her two daughters with her, but was surrounded by a brilliant circle of ladies of quality, who had assembled out of attachment to her and respect to the strangers.* The French cavaliers, who understood Spanish or Italian, conversed as freely with the Neapolitan ladies as they had been accustomed to do at their own court. Madame du Guast requested the *Grand-Prieur* and the gentlemen by whom he was accompanied, to honour her house with their presence, whenever they could not pass their time elsewhere more profitably or more agreeably. The strangers paid daily visits to the marquise, and always found the ladies of the highest rank and greatest beauty in the city, in her company. Frequent tournaments, balls, and grand entertainments were given. The French even began to whisper tender things to the ladies, and these declarations of their passion were not rejected. All these courtesies and liberties proceeded from the desire of attaching the commander of the fleet, and the gentry of a kingdom to which the marquis du Guast was under great obligation.

* *Brantome Dames Gal.* II. p. 240, 242.

Except on such-like extraordinary occasions, the ladies of Naples lived as retired and as secluded from the intercourse with the other sex, as those of the rest of Italy.* Similar civilities to distinguished foreigners of both sexes began, at that time, and continued, in the sequel, to relax the ancient severity in various parts of Italy, while in others the former Oriental or Spanish customs were obstinately maintained. In Brantome's time the proofs of virginity were exhibited at Viterbo as in Spain.† In different parts of Italy, the women likewise concealed their feet with the same care as the Spanish ladies.‡

Brantome thought the Neapolitan ladies so beautiful, that he acknowledged he had never seen finer women except at the courts of France and Spain.§ Montaigne,

* *Brantome Dames Gal.* II. p. 240. "Il n'y manque que la familiere, libre et franche conversation avec dames d'honneur et de reputation." The marquise, on presenting her two daughters to the prince, said; "Voila mes deux filles auxquelles je commenderay, encor qu'elles ne soient si accomplies qu'on diroit bien de vous tenir compagnie à la Françoise, comme de dire, danser, jouer, causer librementet honnestement, comme vous faites à la cour de France."

† *Brantome Dames Gal.* I. p. 94.

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 342.

§ *Ibid.* I. p. 241. "Que hormis nos cours de France et d'Espagne, volontiers ailleurs n'ay je point veu plus belles trouppes de dames."

on the contrary, assures us, that in no country did he meet with so few handsome women as in Italy*; and in describing the principal Italian cities, this attentive observer repeatedly expresses his astonishment at the rarity of female beauty.† But if Montaigne was not deeply impressed with the beauty of the Italian women, he is so much the more profuse in his praises of their taste in dress, excepting, however, that part of it which covered the body. The French philosopher thought that the upper half of the exterior garment of the Italian women did not sufficiently compress the body, or show its form: and he likewise found fault with the taste of the Italians in preferring corpulence and very full bosoms in their wo-

* *Voyage*, p. 109. "M. de Montaigne disoit, jusques lors n'avoir jamais veu nation ou il y eut si peu de belles femmes que l'Italie.

† *Ibid.* p. 92. For instance, in the description of Venice; "Il n'y trouva pas cette fameuse beauté, qu'on attribue aux dames de Venise." &c.; of Rome, p. 125, 141; of Florence, 279. Of the Roman females he says, p. 141, that they are not more beautiful or more amiable than the women of France, but that at Rome there are not so many plain women as in his native country. "Quant à la beauté parfaite et rare, il n'en est, disoit il, non plus qu'en France, et sauf trois ou quatre il n'y trouvoit nulle excellence: mais communement ils sont plus agreables, et ne s'en voit point tant de ledes qu'en France."

men*. In Montaigne's opinion, the attire of the Italian females was beyond comparison richer, their mode of dressing the head, more advantageous, the fashion of their garments more pleasing, and their gait and demeanor more majestic and voluptuous than that of the women of France†. Rich apparel cost the Italian females of the sixteenth century less than those of other countries, because the most splendid stuffs and embroidery were exclusively manufactured in Italy. A lady of high rank and great beauty at Pavia, to whom the marshal de Foix and other gentlemen paid their addresses, chose sky-blue satin for her gala-dress, and employed the best embroiderers in Milan to work, in the stuff, burning candles, with butterflies fluttering round them, and many of which had scorched their wings. When the young

* *Voyage*, p. 141. "Le corps est mieux en France; car icy ellesont l'endret de la ceinture trop lache, et le portent comme nos fames enceintes." p. 111. "Cette duchesse est belle à l'opinion Italienne; le corsage gros, et de tetins a leur souhait."

† *Ibid.* p. 141. "La teste elles l'ont sans compareson plus avantageusement accommodée, et le bas au dessous de la ceinture; leur contenance a plus de majesté de mollesse et de douceur. Il n'y a nulle compareson de la richesse de leurs vetemans aux nostres: tout est plain de perles et de pierreviès."

de Foix accompanied the lady in this dress to a ball, and enquired the meaning of these embroidered figures, she frankly replied, that she wished to intimate to those gentlemen who did her the honour to love her for the sake of her beauty, not to approach too near, as they would gain nothing by their assiduities, but perhaps burn their wings, like the butterflies on her dress.* Nothing that Montaigne met with in Italy gave him so much surprize, as that the female peasants in the environs of Florence and Lucca were not only in general handsome in their persons, but that they were dressed like women of quality, and danced with all the elegance of persons of high rank.† He gave a ball at the baths of Lucca, in honour of the fair country-women, in which the ladies and gentlemen took a part, and at which he distributed nineteen prizes among the best dancers of both sexes.‡ The female Florentine peasants wore the finest shoes and straw-hats, in the manufacture of

* *Brantome Dames Gal.* p. 130, 131.

† *Voyage*, p. 203, 241. "C'est veritablement un spectacle agréable et rare pour nous autres François, de voir de paysannes si gentilles, misés comme des dames, danser aussi bien, et le disputer aux meilleures danseuses"

‡ *Ibid.* p. 235. 237.

which the inhabitants of the vicinity of Florence, particularly excelled.* It was probably this kind of straw-hats that the ladies of Sienna took off at the mass like the men.† In the Florentine states, the duchy of Urbino and some other parts of Italy, the women saluted each other after the French fashion, by curtesies.‡

The most beautiful women were found in Italy, as at Paris, among the public courtezans.§ Montaigne was astonished at the perfidious art with which they contrived to set off their personal recommendations, and to conceal their defects||. When any person had passed the night with a courtezan, he had the liberty of attending her in public the following day.

* *Voyage*, p. 203.

† *Ibid.* p. 117.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 227.

§ *Ibid.* p. 125. "Au demeurant que, comme a Paris, la beauté plus singuliere se trouvoit entre les mains de celle, qui la mettent en vante."

|| *Ibid.* p. 160. Et notammant les courtisanes, qui se montrent a leurs jalousies, avec un art si traitresse, que je me suis souvent esmerveillé comme elles piquent ainsi notre veue; et souvant etant descendu de eheval sur le champ, et obtenu d'être ouvert, j'admirois cela, de combién elles se montroient plus belles qu'elles n'etoient. Elles sçavent se presanter par ce qu'elles ont de-plus agreable; elles vous presenteront seulement le haut du visage ou le bas ou le costé, se couvrent ou se monstrent, si qu'il ne s'en voit une seule lede à la fenêtre."

Courtezans charged nearly as high a price for their mere conversation as for the enjoyment of their charms.* In Montaigne's time the richest courtezans lived at Venice, and the poorest or the least seductive at Florence. In the former city, nothing filled him with such astonishment, as to find one hundred and fifty courtezans rivalling princesses in their expensive furniture and attire, and the nobles publicly visiting and keeping women of that description†. The courtezans of Rome and Venice appeared only at their windows, but those of Florence exhibited themselves at the doors of their houses, which were as wretched and as filthy as their inhabitants were ugly and disgusting.‡ In the corrupt city of Rome, Good Friday was held so sacred, that the

* *Voyage*, p. 167. He visited at Rome "quelque fame des publiques, ou," says he, "j'ai trouvé cet' incommodité qu'elles vandent aussi cher la simple conversation (qui etoit ce que j'y cherchais, pour les ouir deviser et participer à leurs subtilités) et en sont aussi epargnantes que de la negotiation entiere."

† *Ibid.* p. 92. "Mais cela lui sembla autant admirable que nulle autre chose, d'en voir un tel nombre, comme de cent cinquante ou environ, faisant une depense en meubles et vestemens de princesses; n'ayant autre fons à se maintenir que de cete trafique; et plusieurs de la noblesse de la mesme avoir des courtisanes a leurs despens, au veu, et sceu de chacun."

‡ *Ibid.* p. 287, 291.

ladies never ventured to abuse the liberty they enjoyed on that festival, and the courtezans themselves abstained from the pursuit of their profession. All the streets and churches were filled with women; but not the least sign of amorous allurements was to be perceived. On the contrary, the whole city seemed on that day, to have undergone a sudden reformation.*

In Germany and the United Netherlands, in England, Denmark, and Sweden, it is necessary to make a distinction between the courts and the cities which were not the residence of princes, and also between those cities which had a ruling aristocracy and those which had none. In Germany and the other above-mentioned countries, the ladies who belonged to, or frequented the court, were under less restraint than in Italy and Spain. The courts of Germany and other countries imitated the regulations of the French court, in the same degree as they adopted the French cookery, the French courtesy,

* *Voyage*, p. 164. "Les dames sont ce jour la en grande liberté; car toute la nuit les rues en sont pleines, et vont quasi toutes à pied. Toutesfois à la verité il samble que la ville soit fort reformée, notamment en cete desbauche. Toutes oeillades et apparances amoureuses cessent."

and the French fashions*. All these courts, however, were far surpassed in magnificence, and still more in the number, variety and splendor of their diversions by that of France, where hunting-parties, balls, masquerades, grand entertainments and brilliant assemblies followed each other in uninterrupted succession.† When gentlemen of quality gave magnificent repasts, their wives and daughters, as well as those of the guests who were invited, appeared at these entertainments‡; but a great and for a long time, an insurmountable obstacle to the refined and continual intercourse of both sexes, even at courts, was the excessive length of the repasts, the copious libations and the consequent

* *Carloix*, II. p. 117, 118, &c. *Philander von Sittewalt's History*, I. p. 659, 683. What Mademoiselle de Montpensier was told concerning the imperial court, might not be incorrect, namely, that *l'on y vit a l'Espagnole*, I. p. 106.

† Queen Elizabeth of England gave the *Grand Prieur de France* of the house of Lorraine, and the gentlemen who accompanied him, a supper and ball, at which the ladies of honour represented the virgins in the gospel, and the queen herself danced with them. *Brantome Hommes illust.* II. p. 61. At the Hague so lately as the year 1665, the ladies left the assemblies at eight o clock. The prince of Orange used to play half an hour longer. *Gourville*, II. p. 2.

‡ *Aubrey du Maurier Memoires de Hambourg, de Lubeck*, &c. p. 349.

scenes of general intoxication, which continued in the northern countries till the commencement of the eighteenth century.* As long as dinners that lasted several hours were preferred to all other amusements; as long as all entertainments were mere bacchanalian matches, and terminated in general intoxication; finally, as long as it was deemed an honour paid to strangers of distinction to challenge them to trials of strength in drinking, and to strive to overcome them in these contests; so long the men could not make the amusement of the ladies and the service of the sex, their chief study, or one of their principal occupations.

In the cities which were not the residence of a court, all the opulent and most respectable inhabitants were divided into guilds or companies.† Each guild or company had its hall, or place of meeting, where the men daily assembled, and where drinking and gaming constituted their sole, or at least their principal amuse-

* *Carloix*, II. p. 144, 161. IV. 331. *Du Maurier*, p. 26, 27. *Philander von Sittewalt*, I. p. 771, 791. Towards the conclusion of the thirty years war, the French, at least the soldiers of that nation, in Germany, drank more immoderately than the Germans.

† See for example, *Hess Geschichte von Hamburg*, I. p. 402.

ments. Each company had annually, on certain days, grand entertainments, to which the wives and daughters of its members were invited, and which concluded with dances. These dances were often as dissolute as the solemnizations of marriages or the diversions of the baths.* The most decorous amusements were the patrician dances, as they were denominated, which were held from time to time, in honour of princes or other strangers of distinction in the cities containing a ruling aristocracy.† Montaigne was present in 1580, at a patrician dance, given in one of the palaces of the house of Fugger. Round the sides of the dancing-room, were placed two rows of benches covered with scarlet cloth, and designed solely for the accommodation of the ladies.‡ From these benches the dancers fetched their partners, and conducted them back again without paying the least attention to them while

* See my *Geschichte des Mittelalters,* in the chapter that treats of manners.

† See, for instance, *Von Stetten Geschichte von Augsburg,* I. p. 280, 348. In 1538, eleven young gentlemen invited all the ladies of quality to a patrician dance. The authors of the diversion wore doublets and breeches of red satin, a small scarlet cloak thrown over the right shoulder, and green garlands entwined with gold lace upon their heads.

‡ *Voyage,* p. 57.

they were seated.* Each couple quitted the company whenever they were fatigued, and rejoined it after a short pause. When the dancers invited their partners out again, they kissed their own hands, which the ladies took without kissing theirs. At the beginning of the dance, the gentlemen not only embraced the ladies, but they laid cheek to cheek, and the latter put their right hands on the shoulders of their partners, who danced with their heads uncovered.†

In the cities which were not governed by patrician families, such as Hamburg, Lübeck, and Bremen, public amusements, large, mixed companies, and the unrestrained intercourse of the sexes, were still more uncommon than in cities which had an aristocratic government. In the large and opulent Hanse-towns, scarcely any other society was to be found, during the sixteenth and seventeenth, and even in the first half of the eighteenth century,

* "Eux ne se melent pas à elles."

† "Après avoir fait une petite pose ils les vont reprendre; ils baisent leurs mains; les dames les reçoivent sans baiser les leurs, et puis leur mettant la main sous l'aisselle, les embrassent et joignent les joues par le costé, et les dames leurs metent la main droite sur l'espaule. Ils dansent et les entretienrent, tout decouvers, et non fort richement vetus."

except the private family circle, in which the turn and the right to speak was settled according to office, wealth and age.* The men were in general destitute of any other attainments than such as their profession or employment rendered indispensably necessary; and women gave themselves no concern, except about domestic affairs and certain female occupations. With so little intellectual cultivation, the members of these private circles must have been thrown into no small degree of embarrassment, when they were joined by some stranger who came strongly recommended to them. Neither could the latter have found much pleasure in such companies, being unacquainted with the language and jests peculiar to the *coterie*, and wholly uninterested in the local circumstances which formed the subject of conversation. "At Hamburg, Lübeck, and Bremen," says Aubery du Maurier,† who visited the former city in 1637, "the women think of nothing but their domestic concerns. The mothers are engaged with the interior of the house, and the daughters in needle-work and making lace.

* *Von Hess Geschichte von Hamburg*, II. p. 388, &c.

† *Mém. de Hambourg*, p. 35, 36.

The manners, both, of the married and unmarried women are irreproachable. A coquette would be deemed a monster. They read no novels or romances, which are the bane of youth. They are strangers to cards and other games of hazard, by which so many families are ruined in France, and know nothing of comedies, operas, balls, and nocturnal masquerades, where folly revels in a thousand shapes, and very often the grossest debaucheries are practised."

Montaigne found the cities of Switzerland and Germany, their streets and public squares, the houses and furniture, the tables and utensils of their inhabitants more cleanly and comfortable than in France and Italy.* The attire of the Germans and Swiss was, however, less splendid than that of the French and Italians, notwithstanding the declamations of the reformers and their successors, against the increasing luxury of dress. Montaigne never beheld more elegant apartments than in the residences of the family of Fugger.† So much the greater was his astonishment, that the gentlemen of this

* *Voyage*, p. 21, 30, 41, 42, 52, 57, 67, 76, 77, 81, 94, 109.

† *Ibid.* p. 57. "Ce sont des plus riches pièces que j'aye jamais veues."

and other houses were not more richly dressed.*

In Switzerland Montaigne met with a bailiff, a man of great consequence, travelling in his bailiwick, with his son and daughter. The latter was on horseback, as well as her father and brother, and was not accompanied by any female attendant. The costume was so simple and uniform, that the difference of rank could not be distinguished by the apparel.† The women of Switzerland wore in those days, as at present, hats which were not fastened to the head, and were covered either with silk or fur. They were not offended if a stranger took off these hats, in order to see them bare-headed. Young girls had neither hats nor caps, but only wreaths of flowers upon their heads. When a person saluted a woman he kissed his hand, and made a motion as though he would have touched hers. If he took off his hat to them, most of the Swiss females stood, according to ancient custom, quite still. A few only returned the salute by a slight inclination of the head.

In the fourth decennium of the seven-

* *Voyage.* "Non fort richement vetus."

† *Ibid.* p. 29 "Elles n'ont pas grande difference de vestemens, pour distinguer leurs conditions."

teenth century, the women of Hamburg dressed with great modesty, and walked with a grave and deliberate pace when they went abroad.* They carefully covered their bosoms, but wore gold chains about their necks, and many of them had large gold rings on every finger.

In Germany, the luxury of dress was never greater, and the fashions were never more variable than in the latter part of the thirty years' war, by which that country lost two thirds of its population and of its wealth. Many females rubbed, polished, or varnished their faces, after the manner of the Spanish women. Others plucked out, or pencilled the eye-brows, and painted the cheeks and neck red and white. Wide sleeves, large rolls round the hips, hoops, and shoes with heels of prodigious height, were worn as commonly as masks or veils. Women of high rank had a doll sent them every month from Paris, that they might dress after this pattern, or even dispatched their dress-makers to the French capital, in order to study the latest fashions on the spot.† Those ladies were

* *Du Maurier,* as above.

† *Philander von Sittewalt,* I. p. 383, 649, 656, 657, 701, 703.

praised as models of rare virtue, who dressed in black, after the ancient German fashion, and were content with fine and clean linen.* The men could endure no other fashions than those of France.† They altered their hats, doublets, breeches, boots, shoes, and even the form of the beard, exactly as the French did, and chose for their apparel, stuffs of the same colour as were most generally worn in France.‡ Many young people of quality travelled to Paris, not merely to make themselves acquainted with the French language and French compliments, but principally to study the French fashions, and to carry them back to their native country.

* *Philander von Sittewalt*, p. 659.

† *Ibid.* p. 645, 709.

‡ Between the years 1640 and 1650, mixed and light colours were the most common. Philander von Sittewalt informs us, that the ancient Germans called certain colours light, *(licht)* because they denoted levity or licentiousness of morals.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Reign and Court of Louis XIV. of France, in relation to the influence of both on the condition of the Female Sex.

The reign of Louis XIV. incontestably forms one of the most important epochs of modern history. The sixteenth and seventeenth century produced many kings and princes, who surpassed Louis XIV. in magnanimity, goodness of heart, and the heroic virtues: but no other monarch of that age exercised so powerful an influence, not only upon his own people, but on all the other nations and princes of civilized Europe. None of them was so beloved, so admired, and so detested by his subjects;* none was at first so dreaded so hated, and at last so despised and maltreated by his neighbours; none was so fortunate without desert, and so unfortunate through his own fault as Louis XIV. The court of this sovereign pre-

* See the account of the death and interment of the King, in *Richelieu's Memoirs*, I. p. 315.

sented as many and as great disparities and contradictions as his life and reign. Neither at that nor any preceding period, did any other court combine so much external splendor with so much internal wretchedness; pleasures so diversified and so turbulent, with a silence so uniform and so profound; such ostentatious piety with such abominable depravity; such a pompous etiquette, with such a shameless violation of all the laws of decorum; finally, such a refinement of language, and of the *bon ton* of society, with such a want of real good sense, as the court of Louis XIV. It differed from the court of his ancestors, nearly in the same proportion as the latter had differed for ages from the courts of the other sovereigns of Europe. It is impossible to obtain an acquaintance with the court of Louis XIV. unless we take a survey of the spirit of his reign, and of the latter we shall not form a just conception, without a previous knowledge of the character of that monarch.

The understanding of Louis XIV. was neither comprehensive and acute, nor solid and strong. The great mind seeks and discovers truth, however impenetrable the veil with which it may be disguised. The

sound understanding distinguishes truth from error, good from evil, when both are equally near, or are presented to it at the same time. Louis XIV. was incapable either of the one or of the other. During his whole life, he formed such an erroneous estimate of himself and others, as great minds and men of sound understandings could not possibly have done. His most ardent wish was to guide the reins himself, and to form those whom he made his assistants in the government.* He was firmly convinced that he did both, and yet sometimes he was imperceptibly led, at others he was rudely driven, and at last ignominously enslaved by his ministers and his mistresses.† Nothing would have been easier for Louis XIV. than to have found men at his court and in his kingdom, who might have repaired the deficiences of his education and the neglect of his juvenile studies, and have inspired

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 6. "Né avec un esprit au dessous du mediocre mais un esprit capable de se former." See also p. 29, &c. St. Simon's opinion of the talents of Louis XIV. was more correct than that of any other historian or panegyrist.

† Duclos himself judges too favourably of the heart and understanding of Louis XIV. when he says: "Ce prince avoit l'esprit droit, un jugement sain, un gout naturel pour le beau et pour le grand, le desir du vrai et du juste." I. p. 167.

him with correct notions respecting the rights of his people, the duties and true glory of a sovereign, the indivisibility of the interests of the subject from those of the monarch, the essence of genuine virtue and religion, and the precepts of a beneficent and glorious government. So far, however, from seeking the great, the enlightened and well-disposed persons of his nation, Louis shunned, neglected and removed from about him, those whom fortune placed in his way, or at least rejoiced, when death relieved him from such servants whose talents began to be irksome; and this narrow-minded jealousy of superior abilities, this natural sympathy with men of circumscribed understandings and experience, was one of the principal causes of the painful humiliations which he experienced during the latter years of his reign.* Instead of

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 85, 98. "Such was the end of that blind infatuation, that pride of doing every thing, that jealousy of old ministers and generals, that vanity of chusing such men to whom no credit could be ascribed; finally, that whole deplorable system which had nearly involved in utter ruin, and reduced to the brink of despair, this master of peace and war, this dispenser of crowns, this chastiser of nations, this pre-eminently *great* and *immortal* man." *Duclos*, I. p. 182. "He preferred submission to talents, and sometimes said, that he was afraid of men of superior understanding; a fear very common in princes, except they themselves possess so much ability as not to dread a comparison"

adopting with Colbert* the principles of Sully and Henry IV. and making his kingdom happy, by the encouragement of agriculture, manufactures, commerce, the arts and sciences, he sacrificed his own welfare and the prosperity of his people to his own unbridled passions, and to the caprices of the ambitious, domineering, and chimerical Louvois. Instead of listening to the friends of virtue and religion, which the venerable institution of *Port Royal des Champs* contained, or had formed and assembled, he adopted the advice of base flatterers and cunning Jesuits, whose counsels were so pernicious, that a man must have been as blind or as infatuated as Louis XIV. not to have seen the authors of them in their true light. The unworthy and detestable men, in whom Louis XIV. reposed his confidence, perverted his understanding, which naturally did not rise above mediocrity, to such a degree, that he regarded the grossest errors as salutary truths, and the most evident truths as dangerous heresies; that he mistook the most exalted virtues for the most atrocious crimes, and the most atrocious crimes for celestial virtues; that

* See the impressive remonstrances of Colbert to the king, in the *Mém. de Richelieu*, 1. p. 290, 291.

he considered the misery of millions of men as the greatest happiness, and the most insignificant trifles, as subjects of the greatest importance. If we had no other proofs, his sentiments concerning Jansenism and atheism, and the satisfaction which he received from the answer given by his confessor Tellier, to a question which he proposed to him on a matter of conscience, are irrefragable proofs of the imbecility, or at least of the mediocrity of his understanding. Louis was informed, that the duke of Orleans intended to take with him to Spain, a person, whose mother was a notorious Jansenist. He enquired of his nephew, if the report was true, at the same time observing, that, in this case, he could not allow the person in question to accompany the duke. "As to the mother," replied the duke of Orleans, "I neither know what was her creed, nor what was her conduct. But the son, so far from being a Jansenist, does not even believe the existence of a God." "Is it possible!" exclaimed the king. "And may I rely on what you say? In that case he may go with you."* When it was found, during the last years of his

* *St. Simon*, IV. p. 153.

reign, that the taxes, multiplied without end, were inadequate, from the exhausted state of the whole kingdom, to supply the most pressing exigencies of the state, the minister Desmarets projected an impost still more oppressive than any of the preceding, the exaction of a tenth. The cruel and callous monarch himself shrunk from the imposition of this new burden on his impoverished subjects, and he passed several days in the deepest dejection. After some time he recovered his spirits, and acquainted Marechal, his physician, with the cause of his uneasiness and the manner in which it had been removed. He had not only felt compassion for his faithful people, but had even experienced some scruples of conscience respecting the justice of depriving his subjects of their property. Tellier, his confessor, had, however, pacified him with the decision of several members of the Sorbonne, "that the whole property of every Frenchman belonged to the king, and that in taking it, he took no more than what was his own, by all laws divine and human."* Louis XIV. was not sensible of the numberless grievances and the manifold in-

* *St. Simon*, VI. p. 172.

justice which he had heaped upon his faithful people, till his breaking eyes were enlightened by the rays of that eternity into which he was entering; and even then, the veil which had concealed truth from his view was not entirely removed.* If his judgment was correct, it was only in things which deeply interested his vanity; in the science of exhibition, in the art of displaying the beauty and majesty of his person in the most favourable light, and in apportioning to each, by his looks, air, gesture, words, attentions or neglect, that degree of favour or displeasure, which in his opinion he had merited. For the rest, the taste of the king corresponded with his judgment. The palaces and mansions which he constructed, and the gardens which he laid out, were, almost without exception, monsters of art, and crying monuments of a senseless waste of human lives and treasure, by which he thought to vanquish Nature herself, who, however, took the most signal revenge on her impotent adversary.†

Had Louis XIV. possessed still less understanding and taste, had he possessed

* *St. Simon*, p. 217.

† *Ibid.* p. 188.

still less wit and talent for conversation* than he was actually endowed with, still he might have been a great king,† had his bosom but contained a heart fraught with the sentiments of genuine philanthropy. On the contrary, self absorbed all his feelings and all his thoughts, so that he was incapable of loving others with sincerity, of taking a real interest in their weal and woe, and of promoting the happiness of men distinguished by talents and virtues. Louis XIV. persuaded himself that he was the most handsome and the most amiable of men, the greatest and most powerful of monarchs, and he therefore claimed the exclusive love, admiration, and respect of mankind. So excessive was his self-love, that the grossest flattery, and the basest adulation were the most acceptable.‡ The more a man appeared to be struck and overawed by the beauty and majesty of his person, the

* The two latter he possessed in a very great degree. *St. Simon,* I. p. 35.

† "Et même un assez grand roi." *St. Simon,* I. p. 29.

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 32. "Les flatteries lui plaisaient à un tel point que les plus grossières même étoient bien reçues; les plus basses étoient le mieux favourées, et ce n'étoit que par là qu'on s'approchoit de lui : ceux qu'il aima n'en furent redevables qu'a heureusement rencontrer et à ne jamais se lasser dans ce genre."

more certain was he of gaining his favour.* On the other hand, expressions which derogated ever so little from the pretensions of the king, excited his implacable resentment against the contemners of his majesty. Expressions of this kind drew down everlasting disgrace on count Bussi-Rabutin, and accomplished the fall of Louvois.† Louis dissolved in tears when his praises were sung in the prologues to the operas. He repeated these commendations in his apartments, and sung them, but in a low tone, at supper, in the presence of the whole court.‡ It cannot be urged in excuse of Louis XIV. that he was corrupted by flatterers, and that amid a court composed of these poisonous reptiles,§ it is difficult for a prince to escape infection. Flatterers spring up only

* *St. Simon.* I. p. 33. "La souplesse, la bassesse, l'air admirant, craignant, dépendant, rampant, et plus que tout, de néant étoient les uniques voies de lui plaire."

† *Ibid.* "Pour peu, qu'on s'en écartât on n'y revenoit plus, et c'est ce qui acheva la ruine de Louvois." Respecting the imprudent contradiction by which Louvois exasperated the king, see *St Simon*, I. p. 25, and for the account of his death, 61, 75. For the cause of the disgrace of Bussi-Rabutin, see *Siecle de Louis XIV.* T. II. p. 41.

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 33.

§ *Duclos*, II. p. 207. "Faut-il s'étonner qu'au milieu d'une cour d'empoisonneurs, Louis ait pu tomber dans un délire d'amour-propre et d'adulation de lui-même?"

in the courts of those princes, and in the palaces of those nobles, who are known to love any praise more than praiseworthy qualities and actions. Louis XIV. by his inordinate vanity, encouraged flatterers much more than they contributed to inflame and augment that vanity. On account of his immoderate self-love, Louis XIV. felt no attachment even to his own brother, and to his legitimate children; because he deemed every attention that was paid them, a culpable encroachment on the veneration and respect exclusively due to himself, and considered every merit in his relations and family as derogatory to his personal glory. When, therefore, some one applied to the *great Dauphin*, as he was denominated, for his mediation, the prince replied, that his interference would be the surest means of preventing the accomplishment of his wishes. The Dauphin seldom appeared at the court of the king, and when he did, he approached the monarch, not as a father, but as a despot, who beheld in him his future successor, rather than his son.* Towards the prince, who was known by the appellation of the *little Dauphin*,

* *St. Simon*, V. p. 101, &c. *Richelieu*, I. p. 134.

Louis XIV. was at length more favorably disposed, not from his own inclination, but because those who governed him gave a different tone to his mind, and because he was so oppressed by the burden of public affairs, that he rejoiced in having some one to relieve him of the weight.* Louis loved none of his children with such warmth as the duchess of Burgundy, and the loss of none of them afflicted him so deeply as her death.† Nevertheless this favourite princess, who cheered and enlivened the solitude and dereliction of his old age, was not so dear to him but that he exposed her life and that of her child to the most imminent peril, only that he might not be deprived for a short time of the pleasure of her society. The king resolved, contrary to his usual custom, to go to Marly in the beginning of the spring. The physicians represented that the duchess, who was pregnant, and near her time, could not accompany him without great danger. These remonstrances could not shake the resolution of the selfish and heard-hearted Louis. The princess

* *St. Simon*, V. p. 201, &c. VI. p. 37, 63.

† *Ibid.* VI. p. 27. "Le roi et Madame de Maintenon penetrés de la plus vive douleur, qui fut la seule veritable qu'il ait jamais eue dans sa vie."

was obliged to attend him to Marly, and soon after her arrival, the fears and predictions of the physicians were realized. This unpleasant intelligence was conveyed to the king by the duchess de Lude, when the monarch was standing, surrounded by his courtiers, on the bank of a fish-pond. When the lady had retired, the king peevishly said; "The duchess of Burgundy has miscarried." On this, the duke de Rochefoucault observed aloud, that it was a very unfortunate circumstance, because the princess had already experienced several accidents of that kind, and might, perhaps, never have any more children. "Well," replied the king, with great indignation, "and if she should not, what is that to me? Has she not one son, and if he should die, is not the duke de Berry old enough to get children? What do I care which of them is my successor? Are they not all my grand-children. She has miscarried, because her health and constitution were such, that it could not be otherwise. In all my journies, and in any thing else that I have a mind to do, I will not be controlled, either by women or physicians. I will come and go when I please, and no body shall prevent me." All present were so

petrified by this splenetic effusion of the king, that they durst not venture to speak, or scarcely to breathe. This profound silence continued a quarter of an hour, when the king withdrew. The duke de St. Simon was, most certainly, not the only one who now began to think, or was confirmed in the opinion, that the king had neither love nor consideration for any person but himself; and that self was the paramount object of all his actions and of all his desires.*

The king's brother, the duke of Orleans, notwithstanding the effeminate vanity and voluptuousness in which he was immersed, acquired great and merited reputation by the courage and intrepidity which he displayed during a campaign in Flanders.† After the return of the duke, the king paid him a cold compliment, and never sent him again to the army, as all those who knew Louis had foreseen. Immediately after the sudden decease of his brother, Louis XIV., with an air of the utmost astonishment, asked the duchess of Burgundy and Madame de Maintenon,

* *St. Simon*, II. p. 109, 110. "Je me sais gré, d'avoir jugé, sans me tromper, ni faire tort au roi, qu'il n'aimoit, ni ne comptoit que lui, et étoit à soi-même sa dernière fin."

† *Voltaire*, I. p. 226. *St. Simon*, III. p. 47, &c.

why they were so melancholy. He endeavoured to infuse spirits into those two ladies, and began a game. About twenty-four hours after the death of the duke of Orleans, the duke of Burgundy asked the duke de Montfort, if he would play a game at Brelan. "Brelan!" exclaimed the latter, with amazement: "Monsieur is not yet cold." "I am fully sensible of that," replied the prince; "but it is the will of the king that no one shall feel *ennui* at Marly. He has therefore commanded me to prevail on the whole court to play, and to set the example myself, if no other person would venture to make a beginning."*

The same inordinate self-love which estranged Louis XIV. from his brother and his legitimate children, rendered him a partial protector of his bastards, and a cruel tyrant to his mistresses and all the other ladies, to whom he once endeavoured to be gallant. He elevated his bastards, contrary to the fundamental laws of the realm, and conferred on them almost all the privileges of legitimate children, because they had nobody but himself to thank for all they enjoyed, and were

* *St. Simon*, III. p. 47.

living monuments of his unbounded authority. None of his illegitimate sons was a greater favourite with him than the duke de Maine, whose heart was still more disgusting than his person.*

It was very early observed of Louis XIV.,† that he did not chuse for his mistresses, such females as were most distinguished for beauty and talents, but such as were, or affected to be most passionately in love with him, and thereby flattered his vanity. The king never sacrificed to any of his female favourites, however recent, or however impetuous his passion might be, any one resolution he had formed, or the most trivial of his customs. When he went to any of his palaces, or to the army, his mistresses, whether sick, or pregnant, or just recovered from lying-in, were obliged to accompany him in their stiff and formal court-dresses; they were forced to endure heat and cold, rain and dust, without a murmur; to eat and drink, to laugh, dance and be gay, whenever the king pleased. Louis imposed no restraint on himself, if

* *St. Simon*, II. p. 72. III. p. 114, 115. VI. p. 203, 204. *Richelieu*, I. p. 134.

† *De la Fayette Hist. de Mad. Henr. d'Angleterre*, p. 15.

he happened to be overtaken by a pressing occasion of nature. His mistresses, and the other ladies, chose rather to risk life and health, than to detain the king a moment, and thereby to excite his displeasure.* He treated none of his mistresses with such indulgence, and for none of them did he so often forget his high station and his imaginary greatness, as for the sake of Madame de Maintenon:† and yet this all-powerful woman was obliged to attend him in his excursions, even when she was so ill that it was feared she would die by the way.‡

The most infallible sign of a good and generous heart, is a cheerful acknowledgment of the merits and talents of others, and a promptitude to reward them to the best of our ability. Louis XIV. never of his own accord, conferred praise, honours or emoluments, to reward real merit, but merely to gratify a blind partiality, gained in general by foibles and by vices. He never employed his great generals and ministers, except when he was forced: he withheld from them the re-

* *St. Simon*, II. p. 106, 115.

† Especially at the celebrated review at Compeigne in the face of the whole army. *St. Simon*, II. p. 131.

‡ *Ibid.*

muneration they had deserved, or wounded their feelings by assumed coldness, or by the elevation of unworthy favourites to whom he was in general the more strongly attached, the more they had injured himself and his kingdom by their incapacity, or their reprehensible passions.* Louis was severely punished for his indifference and aversion to eminent talents. After the great men whom he found in office were gradually removed from the stage, their places were supplied by persons of the meanest abilities, who brought the king and the nation to the brink of apparently inevitable destruction.

If the character of Louis XIV. was such as it is here delineated, how, it will be asked, did he acquire that enthusiastic love and admiration, which were entertained for him during the first twenty or thirty years of his reign, not only by his flatterers, but by his subjects of every rank, age and sex; and which caused them to force upon him the surname of the great, and even of the greatest of kings? Whence arose that universal and long protracted intoxication, in which the nobility and clergy, the citizens, peasants and sol-

* See *Mém. de M. de la Fare*, p. 238.

diery, laid at his feet not only their lives and fortunes, but even their consciences and their honour, and rejoiced when they could devote themselves and all that belonged to them to his pleasure, or his service?*

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 101. "Prince heureux, s'il en fut jamais: en sujets adorateurs prodiguant leurs biens, leur talents, leur sang, la plupart jusqu'à leur réputation, quelques-uns même leur honneur, et même beaucoup trop leur conscience et leur religion pour le servir, souvent même seulement pour lui plaire." That no king was ever more generally, more passionately and more disinterestedly beloved and admired by his people, than Louis XIV. during the first half of his reign, appears from numberless passages in the letters of Madame de Sevigné and the count Bussi-Rabutin. Louis XIV. had punished the latter for certain sarcasms by a disgrace of seventeen years. At length he permitted the count to appear again at court. The long dejected warrior, if he had beheld the Almighty himself, face to face, could not have testified more profound humility, more lively joy, and stronger emotion, than he did on occasion of the first audience. *Lettres*, IV. p. 439. The governors of the provinces rejoiced when they could relinquish, for a time, the important parts which they acted there, and could repair to Versailles, merely to obtain a sight of the king, even though he might not deign to take the least notice of them. *Lettres de Sevigné*, VIII. p. 260. "Ils sont si passionez pour sa personne, qu'ils ne souhaitent que de quitter ces grands roles de comedie, pour le venir regarder à Versailles quand même ils devroient n'en être pas regardez. The Minims of a convent, in Provence, dedicated to the king a thesis in which they compared him with God, and in such a manner that they clearly appeared to be of opinion that God was only a copy of the king. The bishop of Meaux told Louis that he ought not to suffer the thesis to be published. The king was of the same opinion. It was sent to the Sorbonne,

The lassitude which succeeded the disturbances during the regency of the queen-mother; the repugnance excited by the administration of such men as Richelieu and Mazarin; the sincere interest which Louis XIV. took after the death of the latter in the management of public affairs; the firmness with which the young king maintained the honour of his crown against Rome, Genoa, and Spain; the precious fruits of the administration of Colbert, which diffused trade, manufactures and increasing prosperity over all the provinces of the kingdom; the formidable naval and military forces which Louis created at one and the same time; the brilliant victories and conquests which he achieved; and even the unparalleled splendor of the court and its diversions, contributed not a little to the love and admiration, which, for twenty or thirty years, all France manifested for her adored monarch. But the principal cause of the homage that was paid him, was the extraordinary beauty, elegance, and majesty

and the Sorbonne likewise answered, that the thesis ought to be suppressed. Madame de Sevigné concludes the anecdote with this reflection: "Trop est trop; je n'eusse jamais soupçonné des Minimes d'en venir à cette extremité." VI. p. 429.

that were diffused over his whole person, that pervaded his look, his mien, his attitudes, his motions, and every word that he uttered.* When mounted on horseback, no other man could sustain a comparison with him, and then he fascinated the people and the army no less than the hearts of the females.† No prince ever enhanced his favours so much by the manner in which they were conferred, or knew how to temper the doubtful tendency of an answer, or the disappointment of a refusal by his demeanor, so well as Louis XIV. During his long reign, it was only on very few occasions that he forgot himself so far as to behave towards persons who were present, with a vehemence which did not correspond with the dignified composure that he was accustomed to maintain. The beauty and dignity of his person, and of his whole behavior towards persons of both sexes, of all ranks, and of all ages, disposed the dazzled court and the

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 35, 151, &c.

† "Il etoit sensible aussi à entendre admirer, le long des camps, son grand air et sa grande mine, son adresse à cheval et tous ses travaux." *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 75. Speaking of a *carousel* held at the Tuileries, she says: "Je ne l'ai jamais vu avoir si bonne mine, quoique dans toutes ses actions il surpasse en bonne grace tout ce qu'il y a de gens au monde; je puis dire, qu'il se surpassoit lui même."

fascinated people to ascribe to him all the successes and merits of his ancestors and ministers, as well as all the exploits of his generals and armies.* Louis XIV. is a remarkable instance, not only of the importance of personal advantages, and of a dignified demeanor in princes, but also of an inflexibility which the most unyielding pride is capable of producing, and which, nevertheless, interests and commands respect. He bore the sudden extinction of his numerous family, the annihilation of his power and of his glory, the keen taunts of his enemies, and the slow advances of certain death with an heroic fortitude, and equanimity which nothing could shake, even when all around him were plunged into pusillanimity and despair.† If the motive of this firmness had been more honourable, than the character of the king would lead us to conjecture that it was, he would by this alone have merited the surname of the great, so prematurely con-

* The art of fascinating is very erroneously called by the duke de St. Simon, the art of governing. If both be synonimous, no man, indeed, ever attained such a proficiency in the art of governing as Louis XIV. See *St. Simon*, I. p. 105. "Jamais prince ne posseda l'art de regner à un si haut point."

† *St. Simon*, VI. p. 199, 225.

ferred upon him.* His long and severe conflict with every kind of private and public calamity, reconciled him with his subjects, and even with his enemies. The former restored their affection, and the latter the respect which they had withdrawn from him during the period of his arrogance and the abuse of his prosperity.

If the unlimited extension, and the most arbitrary exercise of the royal prerogative could give a monarch a just claim to the title of great, then, indeed, no other sovereign of any civilized nation of Europe ever deserved it better than Louis XIV.† Louis was firmly persuaded that a king of France has a right to do what-

* *St. Simon*, p. 200. "Cette constance, cette fermeté d'ame, cette égalité exterieure, ce soin toujours le même de tenir tant qu'il pouvoit le timon, cette esperance contre toute esperance par courage et sagesse, et non pas aveuglement, ces dehors de même roi en toutes choses, c'est ce dont peu d'hommes auroient été capables; c'est ce qui lui avoit pu meriter le nom de grand, qui lui avoit été si premurement donné."

† *St. Simon*, I. p. 198, extracted from a fragment by the duke de Richelieu. "Jamais il n'exista dans le monde un aussi puissant monarque, jamais souverain ne merita à plus juste titre le nom de grand, jamais roi ne sut réunir aussi intimement le pouvoir legislatif, executif, judiciaire et militaire; jamais souverain n'exerca à la fois tous les pouvoirs aussi long-temps; c'est dans ce sens seul, qu'il mérite ce nom de *Grand*.

ever he pleases;* that his will is his sole and supreme law; that the people are made for kings, and not kings for the people.† Conformably with these notions, he regarded the assemblies and the deliberations of the states as seditious and rebellious limitations of the royal authority; and he was fortunate enough to render these opinions, during his long reign, and even to a still later period, the predominant sentiments of his people, who piqued themselves on nothing so highly as on the arbitrary power of their kings.‡ He annihilated the remaining rights of the provinces, the higher estates and the parliaments, diminished the consequence of the principal officers of the court and crown, and embroiled the nobles and the clergy, the civil and the military powers, that he might abridge the influence of the one by means of the other, and thus reduce them all to an entire de-

* The marquis de la Fare informs us, that this was also the opinion of Colbert himself. *Mém.* p. 33.

† The little dauphin publicly maintained that a king is made for his subjects, and not his subjects for him. "This," says the duke de St. Simon, "was a sentiment worthy of a father of his people, but a sentiment that in any other reign but his own, would be deemed the most horrible of blasphemies."

‡ *St. Simon,* I. p. 36, &c. 104, &c.

pendence upon himself.* During the preceding reigns, it had been customary to confer the first offices in the kingdom, and the principal places about the court, on gentlemen and ladies of the highest quality.† Under Louis XIV. almost all the distinctions of birth and rank were absorbed in the majesty of the king. The royal favour was the only source of all influence, rank, and power. The sons of the most distinguished houses were obliged to wait their turn for promotion like any others, and the heads of those houses themselves enjoyed the dignities they possessed in the army and at court, through the favour of the king alone, and not through the merits and the achievements of his ancestors.‡ The secretaries

* *St. Simon* and *Richelieu*, I. p. 207, 213, &c

† *Sevigné*, V. 288, 289. "On pretend que toute place par laquelle on est choisie dans la maison du seigneur, honore la personne nommée; tout est rehaussé maintenant. Autrefois les dames d'honneur de la reine étoient des marquises; et toutes les grandes charges de la maison du roi etoient aux seigneurs; aujourdhui tout est due et marechal de France. Tout est monté."

‡ *Mém. de St. Simon*, I. p. 107, 109. "Ce qui fut encore une autre adresse pour ruiner les seigneurs et les accoutumer à l'egalité et à rouler pêle-mêle avec tout le monde; invention due à lui et à Louvois, qui vouloit régner aussi sur toute seigneurie, et la rendre dependante de lui, en sorte que les gens nés pour commander aux autres, demeurerent dans les idées et ne se trouverent plus dans

of state, being the most intimate confidants of the king, and the immediate instruments of his will, lorded it over the first nobles of the realm, and even the princes of the blood themselves;* and yet, with the single exception of the duke de Beauvilliers, all these ministers were chosen from among the *Roture*, as it was denominated.† With the augmentation of the authority and the influence of the secretaries of state, an alteration took place in their costume, and the etiquette which they observed towards others, and which others were obliged to observe towards them.‡ The value of places was estimated by the degree of approximation which they occasioned between the holders and the king;§ and for this reason the favourite grooms of his bed-chamber were treated by persons of the highest rank as their equals: an unnatural humiliation

aucune realité---Il assujettit tout a debuter par être cadet dans ses gardes du corps, et à faire tout le même service des simples gardes du corps."

* None treated all that was great and dignified with such arrogance and contumely as Louvois. *Mem. de la Fare*, p. 214.

† *St. Simon*, I. p. 42. V. p. 48.

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 37, 39.

§ *Ibid* p. 46. "C'est là ce qui rendit les charges qui approchoient de la personne du roi si considerables; et ceux quiles possedoient si considerés."

which Louis not only approved, but even required.* When young gentlemen or noblemen were deterred by the mortifications that awaited every man of rank from entering the service, or quitted it, resolving to endure them no longer, they were persecuted in every possible way, and often utterly ruined by the intendants of the provinces. Louis XIV. united in his own hand all the branches of the supreme power, civil and military ;† and this tremendous hand was guided by ministers and mistresses, and by all those who possessed any influence over either, much more frequently for the destruction of innocence and merit, than for the punishment of guilt.‡ When any minister,

* *St. Simon*, as above, and *Duclos*, I. p. 183. The king once sent one of his inferior attendants with a letter to the duke de Montbazon. On the arrival of the messenger, the duke was just about to sit down to table. To honour the king, in the person of his domestic, he obliged the latter to take the first place at the table, and after dinner accompanied him as far as the court of his house. The king was highly pleased with the respect paid to his attendant, and afterwards repeated the anecdote with evident satisfaction.

† See *Richelieu*, I. p. 207, &c. on the *Lettres de cachet*, and the royal commissions.

‡ *St. Simon*, I. p. 198. "Le roi vouloit se mêler de tout, gouverner toutes les affaires, diriger tous ses ministres, regler, ordonner, arranger toutes choses, remédier à tous les abus, exercer toute sa puissance, former même

or mistress, any favourite, or favourite's favourite was desirous of accomplishing the ruin of a man, no innocence was so manifest, no merit so great, no rank so exalted as to protect the unfortunate victim from the loss of liberty, property, and life itself. The French, during the reign of Louis XIV. were so accustomed to the abuse of the regal, and particularly of the judicial power, that they regarded arbitrary exile and confinement by *lettres de cachet*, and also the violation of the secrets conveyed by the post, as beneficial and necessary arrangements.* The assumption of the criminal jurisdiction by the court encouraged numberless private informers and false accusers, who joined the hosts of the secret spies of the police, and plunged many thousand families into ruin. Louis XIV. completed, without trouble and without resistance, the work of despotism which his predecessors had for two centuries been regularly planning and prosecuting. He was the fortunate mortal, who reaped all the advantages

ses ministres, diriger ses generaux, et jusq'aux directeurs de ses bâtimens: il vouloit être general, magistrat, juge, exercer, même la fonction de punir, comme un lieutenant-criminel, par ses lettres de cachet."

* *St. Simon* I. p. 144, 146.

which princes have ever promised themselves from the attainment and exercise of unlimited power. He was also the man who prepared for his successors that fate which has overtaken them in our days, and paved the way to a revolution which has involved, and which will perhaps, for a long time to come involve, not only France, but a great part of the rest of Europe in anarchy and misery.

Those who have studied the virtues and vices of Louis XIV. and the spirit of his govèrnment, will find no difficulty in accounting for the changes which he effected in his court, in his whole kingdom, and even in many other countries of Europe.

Louis XIV. was the first monarch that relinquished the ancient practice of the European sovereigns, of living in the sight of their people and in the capital of their kingdoms. He removed his court from Paris to the country, first to St. Germain, and thence to Versailles, paying annual visits from the latter to his other palaces. The principal cause of this removal of the court, was an inveterate antipathy to the city of Paris, which he never could forgive, for having joined the insurgents during his minority, and compelled himself and his mother to betake

themselves to flight.* With this cause were afterwards associated many others, which likewise originated in the way of thinking and character of the king. The change of the usual residence of the French monarchs is an important circumstance, because it considerably increased the expences of the court and courtiers; because it was imitated by many other kings and princes; and because the court and cabinet were thereby separated from the *cours souveraines*, or the superior provincial jurisdictions.

Louis XIV. was more solicitous to appear great than to be so; and he, therefore, preferred the empty honour of being the centre of a numerous and brilliant court, to the glory of the greatest achievements and the most salutary works of peace. Before his marriage, and previous to the death of cardinal Mazarin, Louis increased not only the number of the corps of of his guards, but likewise the complement of each corps; and these guards were the principal subject of his conversation, even with ladies, in the early period of his marriage.† After the de-

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 135, 136. *Duclos*, I. p. 185.

† This is related not only by Mademoiselle de Montpensier, but in almost all the other *Memoires* of those times.

cease of the cardinal and of the queen-mother, he augmented the number of places and offices, not only at his own court, but likewise at that of the queen, at least in the same proportion as he had increased the *maison du roi*.* As his own and his brother's family became more numerous, new establishments were formed, and new places created. All these, though they had their respective motions, revolved round the court of the king, like the planets about the sun. The numerous retinue, or rather retainers of both sexes, who were paid for their attendance, formed but a small portion of the court of the king. Louis XIV. required all families, and persons of distinction, whose circumstances were not an insurmountable impediment, to make the court their usual residence, and thus to swell his magnificent train.† At rising and retiring to bed, at dinner and supper, in his way through the apartments, and in the walks of Versailles, he took particular notice who were remiss and

* *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 131. "Dans ce temps-là, la reine n'avoit que six dames dont Madame de Montespan en etoit une; le nombre en fut bientot augmenté. Le roi aime tout ce qui va à la grandeur."

† *St. Simon*, I. p. 141. "Non seulement il etoit sensible à la presence continuelle de ce qu'il y avoit de distingué, mais il l'étoit aussi aux etages inferieurs."

who were assiduous in their attendance. Whoever appeared but seldom at court, or entirely kept aloof from it, inevitably incurred the displeasure of the monarch; and if any one solicited a place for such a person, the king would drily answer: "I don't know the man," or, "I never see him." If a person frequented the court at Versailles as much as the king wished, and did not accompany him to Fontainebleau, or request permission to attend him to Marly, provided such permission had not been invariably refused; this, in the eyes of the king, was a culpable mark of disrespect. Those who belonged to the court were obliged to assign very weighty reasons, if they were desirous of quitting it and of visiting their estates for ever so short a time. But the most unpardonable offence of all was, when gentlemen or ladies preferred living at Paris to a residence at court.*

Without the amusements of the court,

* There were always some who preferred a residence at Paris to a court life. To these belonged among others the beautiful countess de la Riviére, one of the warmest panegyrists of the capital. See her *Letters*, I. p. 341. II. p. 242. When the young countess de Caylus was informed that she was forbidden the court, she rejoiced at being released from the *ennui* which it occasioned. *Mém. de Maintenon*, III. p. 77.

the well-known wishes of the monarch and the fear of his displeasure would have been sufficient to draw the opulent nobility of the whole kingdom to Paris and Versailles. The most distinguished and wealthy of the French nobles built or purchased palaces in the capital, where their wives and children resided the greatest part of the year, even when the husbands and fathers were absent with the army, or on embassies. The hotels of the great, like the courts of the king, the princes, and princesses of the blood royal, became the schools of politeness.* At the same time they were schools from which not only the graces, but also the vices of the courtiers were disseminated in the capital, communicated by the capital to the provinces, and spread as far as the imitation of courtly refinement extended.† The court of the mo-

* *Voltaire*, II. p. 139. "Les maisons que tous les seigneurs batirent ou achetérent dans Paris, et leurs femmes, qui y vecurent avec dignité, formérent des écoles de politesse, qui retirérent peu à peu les jeunes gens de cette vie de cabaret, qui fut encore longtems à la mode."

† Thomas asserts a falsehood in the *Essai sur les Femmes*, when speaking of the reign of Louis XIV. he observes: "Jusqu'alors les vices de la cour n'avoient guères été ceux de la nation." He is, however, perfectly correct when he says a little farther on: "Tout imita la cour, et d'un bout du royaume à l'autre, les vices circulérent avec

narch did not gain so much in splendor by the assemblage of the nobility, neither was the capital so much benefited by the expences of the courtiers, and the new impulse which they gave to all the different branches of industry, as the noble families and all the provinces were injured by the residence of the greatest land proprietors at Paris and Versailles. By the style in which they were obliged to live, the greater part of the nobility reduced themselves to indigence, or contracted such debts as render it difficult to conceive how they were able to keep up their usual establishment;* and yet on every new

les agrémens." The veneration and enthusiasm with which every thing that came from the court was adopted in the capital, and all that came from the capital was received in the provinces, are evinced by the following passage of *La Bruyere*, p. 124, 125. "Le rebut de la cour est reçu à la ville dans une ruelle, où il defait le magistrat---Il est ecouté, il est aimé; on ne tient guère plus d'un moment contre une écharpe d'or et une plume blanche; contre un homme qui *parle au roi, et voit les ministres*. Il fait des jaloux et des jalouses; on l'admire; il fait envie.---Un homme de la ville est pour une femme de province ce qu'est pour une femme de ville un homme de la cour."

* "The tradespeople," says Madame de Sevigné, so early as the year 1672, "have for some time been reduced to great distress. Every body can attest the truth of what I say. Their creditors tell them that they are very sorry, but they have not a shilling, they cannot borrow, the farmers make no payments, they dare not coin, and have

occasion the French courtiers, inflamed by the desire of pleasing the king, always found inexhaustible resources.* In 1688, after a peace of ten years, the royal coffers were exhausted to such a degree as to be inadequate to the payment of the salaries due to the king's attendants; and yet these salaries constituted the principal part of the income of most of them.† The more

no inclination to sell themselves to the devil; and, notwithstanding all this, every body repairs to the army with an equipage. To inform you how this is managed, would be a difficult task. The miracle of the five loaves is not more incomprehensible." See also, VI. p. 178. "This beggary of the courtiers appears to me a kind of black art. They never have a *sou*, and yet they attend the king in all his journeys and all his campaigns, follow all the fashions, are present at every ball, every race, every lottery, and still go on, though they are over head and ears in debt. I forgot gaming, which is another pretty article. Their estates diminish; but that does not signify; they still find means to keep up their extravagance." This was written in 1680.

* Madame de Sevigné, in a letter, written in 1692, to the count de Rabutin, and inserted in the collection of the latter, T. II. p. 188., observes: "There will be a grand ball, for which all those who declare themselves not worth a *sou*, are putting themselves to the expence of two or three hundred pistoles. For this reason, nobody gives credit to their embarrassments, which, however, are but too true. The French find resources in their desire to please the king, which would be quite incredible, did we not witness them with our own eyes. We, therefore, observe all the courtiers, both young and old, dressed according to their age, and always with magnificence."

† *De la Fayette Mémoires de la cour de France*, p. 136, 137. "Mais sur quoi l'on étoit encore plus impa-

urgent were the necessities of the court and its attendants, so much the harder were the terms on which both of them procured money, so much the more exorbitant was the interest demanded, and so much the more scarce and valuable was specie. Madame de Sevigné complains, in many of her letters, of the scarcity of money in the metropolis, and still more in the provinces, which were exhausted by the heavy imposts and the continual absence of most of the great land-holders. The estates of the absentees were entrusted to the management of incapable, or dishonest agents, and besides, it was extremely difficult to convert the gradually decreasing produce into money.* Many families of distinc-

tient, c'étoit sur les pensions, qui ne se payoient point du tout. La plûpart des officiers n'ayoient pourtant que cet argent de sûr et de solide. Cela faisoit apprehender la continuation de la guerre . . . car il paraissoit certain, que puisqu'après dix ans de paix, ou peu s'en falloit, et le roi jouissant d'un grand revenu, on ne trouvoit pas un sol dans ses coffres," &c.

* The count de Rabutin once wrote to Madame de Sevigné as follows; "I receive more in proportion from my estate than you do from Bourbilly, because I am on the spot, and you are at a considerable distance. A person may live, as you observe, Madam, on the produce of his estate when he consumes it himself; but remit it and its amount dwindles almost to nothing. You tell me that when a person is engaged at court, it is almost impossible to procure the remittance of his revenues, and I must inform you that I am in the same way of thinking." II. p. 79.

tion were reduced to indigence by their prodigality, and their possessions fell into the hands of men who had rapidly enriched themselves by usury, and who were at that time denominated *Partisans.** The others saved themselves from a similar fate, either by embezzling the revenues of the crown, or by the extortions they practised in the provinces, or by intermarriages with the children of rich usurers and financiers. Colbert's measures for the encouragement of commerce and manufactures had no share in the depopulation of the country, and the decline of agriculture. The real causes of the latter were the wars of Louis XIV. the many and heavy imposts which they occasioned, the impoverishment of the French nobility, and the continual absence of almost all the proprietors from their estates.

Louis XIV. was anxious to have, not only the most numerous, but also the most splendid court that any European monarch had ever held. The total revenues of the greatest kings of Europe were scarcely equal to the sums annually expended by Louis XIV. on his palaces and gardens, in comparison of which, those

* *Bruyere*, p. 187, 203.

of the sovereigns, his contemporaries, were mere cottages and kitchen-gardens. With the number and the extent of his palaces and gardens, corresponded the quantity and magnificence of their furniture and decorations; the splendor of the tables and services of plate,* of the hunting establishment,† liveries‡ and equipages.§

* It is astonishing how Voltaire could mention in terms of such commendation the excessive profusion of the tables kept at court. II. 36. "Il rétablit les tables instituées par François I, et les augmenta. Il y en eut douze pour les officiers commençaux, servies avec autant de propreté et de profusion que celle de beaucoup de souverains." Whoever obtained permission to accompany him to Marly, "pouvoit donner des repas dans son apartement, on y étoit servi avec la même délicatesse que le maître." The king likewise kept a public table when he was with the army. *St. Simon*, I. p. 159. Respecting the etiquette which the king observed at his own table at court, and in the army, see the same writer, I. p. 157, and the *Anecdotes of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 77, 78. In consequence of places of every kind being put up to sale, many of the offices about the king's table, or at least, the table of the royal family, fell into the hands of persons belonging to rich families from among the *bourgeois*.

† *St. Simon*, I. p. 137. "Loin de ces temps réservés à son fils où les routes, la vîtesse des chiens et le nombre gagé des piqueurs et des chasseurs à cheval, a rendues les chasses si aisées et si courtes."

‡ He introduced a peculiar and very expensive court-dress. It was deemed a great favour when any one obtained permission to wear this costume. *Volt.* II. p. 35. *St. Simon*, I. p. 139, 140.

§ *Voltaire*, II. p. 120. "It was about this time that the magnificent luxury of carriages, ornamented with win-

But in nothing did Louis XIV. surpass all his predecessors more than in the taste and brilliancy of the entertainments which he gave, and the charms of the daily amusements which he introduced at court, and in the capital. Tragedies, comedies, and operas, promenades, excursions, and water-parties, both by day and by night, concerts, balls, assemblies, dinners, and suppers followed in uninterrupted succession, not only at the court of the king, but likewise at the courts and in the palaces of the princes, the princesses, and other persons of high rank.*

Under no other monarch was this love of amusement and conviviality communicated so generally by the court to the higher classes in the metropolis, and by the latter to the provinces, as in the reign

dows, and hung upon springs, was invented." Bells in apartments were likewise introduced during the reign of Louis XIV. *St. Simon*, II. p. 18.

* For example, at the court of Henrietta of England, See *Hist. de Mad. Henriette d'Angleterre*, p. 50, 52. in Vol. VIII. of *Œuvres de Mad. de la Fayette*. "Toutes ces personnes passoient les après-dînées chez Madame. Elles avoient l'honneur de la suivre au cours; au retour de la promenade on soupoit chez Monsieur; après le souper tous les hommes de la cour s'y rendoient et on passoit le soir parmi les plaisirs de la comedie, du jeu, et des violons. Après souper on montoit dans des calèches, et au bruit des violons on s'alloit promener une partie de la nuit autour du canal."

of Louis XIV.* During the regency of queen Anne of Austria, the bishops had endeavoured to prove the unlawfulness of theatrical amusements. Under Louis XIV. the bishops thought themselves happy in having a particular place assigned them at the theatre.† The frequent *fêtes* instituted by Louis XIV. especially during the first ten years of his reign, excited greater admiration and emulation, both in and out of France, than all his subsequent victories and conquests.‡ All the courtiers indiscriminately, were not allowed to participate in these *fêtes*, or to attend the monarch in his excursions to Marly, Trianon and other places, but only such as had received an invitation to that purpose; and these invitations were an especial favour, by which the king en-

* *Voltaire Siècle de Louis XIV.* T. II. p. 141. "But the houses, the theatres, the public walks, in which people began to assemble to enjoy a more agreeable life, rendered the exterior of all the citizens nearly alike. At the present day, we may, perhaps, observe even behind the counter, that politeness has reached every condition. The provinces also, in time, underwent all these changes."

† *Voltaire*, II. p. 7.

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 24, 43. The nuptials of the duke of Burgundy occurred during a gloomy period for the French court, and yet 36,000 strangers assembled at this fête. *Mém. de la Rivière*, II. p. 320. The number of strangers and the splendor of the court were equalled by the boldness of the pickpockets, whose dexterity very few escaped. p. 308, 309.

couraged the courtiers to be assiduous in their attentions.* These *fêtes* and diversions gave rise to a notion, which almost universally prevailed among the courtiers, that no life could be so happy as theirs, and that those who had once tasted its delights could never be satisfied in any other situation.† Still higher was the opinion entertained of the pleasures of the court in the capital, in the provinces, and even abroad.‡ People sacrificed their

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 137, 139. "Lets fêtes fréquentes, les promenades particuliéres à Versailles, les voyages furent des moyens que le roi saisit pour distinguer et pour mortifier, en nommant les personnes qui à chaque fois en devoient être, et pour tenir chacun assidu et attentif à lui plaire."

† Even most of the courtiers, though in other respects men of sound understanding, were possessed with this notion. *Bussi-Rabutin Lettres*, III. p. 40. "Je n'oublie pas que les agrémens de la cour etoient toute ma ressource. . . Je les regrette à tous momens. Nous nous y reverrons un jour, Madame, à cette agréable cour." A daughter of Monsieur was married to the duke of Florence. The grand-duchess quitted a court where she was mistress, because she could not endure the absence from that of France. The grand-duke once said to a gentleman of quality from Turin, to which court, likewise, France had given a princess: "Ah, monsieur! que vous êtes heureux d'avoir eu une princesse de France, qui ne s'est point fait un martyre de regner dans votre cour." *Sevigné*, IV. p. 240.

‡ *Bruyere*, p. 225. "La province est l'endroit d'où la cour, comme dan sson point de vüe, paroît une chose admirable; si l'on s'en approche, ses agrémens diminuent comme ceux d'une perspective, que l'on voit de trop prés."

fortunes, their repose and their domestic comforts; they endured the greatest mortifications, and suffered themselves to be treated like menials,* if they could but in any way whatever gain admission at court.† When the diversions of the court had lost the charm of novelty, still they did not renounce them, because long habit had rendered them indispensably necessary; and each consoled himself for the privation of real felicity with the idea, that he should pass among those who were strangers to the insipidity, the depravity and the vexations attendant on a court-life, for one of the few happy mortals out of many millions.‡ Many gentlemen and ladies, after losing the consideration they had previously enjoyed, immured themselves out of despair in convents.§ Others were deeply sensible of the mortifications of a life at court, and the uniformity of its amusements.‖

* *La Bruyere*, p. 225. "L'on s'accoutume difficilement à une vie, qui se passe dans une antichambre, dans des cours, où sur un escalier."

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 304. "Vous êtes etonnée que la presse soit si grande, vous n'êtes pas seule; mais la rage est d'être la *in ogni modo*."

‡ *La Bruyere*, p. 246, 247.

§ *Mém. de Montpensier*, I. p. 141.

‖ *De la Fayette Mém. de la cour de France*, p. 101. "A l'égard de la cour de France tout y etoit comme à l'ordi-

Nevertheless, few or none at all, possessed sufficient good sense, to conceive, while at court, any disgust of a courtier's life, or any desire to exchange it for the pleasures of solitude and retirement.*

The splendor of the court of Louis XIV. and the persuasion of the happiness of a life passed at that court, continued no longer than till the private marriage of the king with Madame de Maintenon. This artful woman inspired Louis with such an attachment to habits of solitary piety and rigid exercises of devotion, that he became the enemy even of innocent pleasures.† He not only renounced all turbulent diversions himself,‡ but disapproved of his children partaking in juvenile amusements.§ From this period, the

naire. Il y a un certain train qui ne change point : toujours les mêmes plaisirs, toujours aux mêmes heures, et toujours avec les mêmes gens."

* *La Bruyere*, p. 257. "Un esprit sain puise à la cour le goût de la solitude et de la retraite."

† *St Simon*, I. p. 19. "Depuis 1684 jusqu'en 1688, le temps se passa dans le cabinet, moins en fêtes qu'en dévotions et en contrainte; et ici finit l'apogée de ce regne, et ce comble de gloire et de prosperités."

‡ "Now-a-days," says Madame de la Fayette, p. 127. "no piety, no salvation at court, any more than in the other world." And p. 154. "It was thought that the levees would also commence again, but the king suppressed those pleasures."

§ *Mad. de la Fayette*, p. 131. "Monseigneur don-

balls given at court were extremely dull, and never lasted so long as two hours.* A portion of the pleasures which the king scared from his court, took refuge in that of Monsieur and the duchess of Burgundy, but on the death of that prince, and more especially after the decease of the duchess, the whole court was involved in dreary darkness, which gradually grew thicker and more dismal, till the death of Louis XIV. himself.†

As Louis XIV. by means of allurements or compulsion, and by the splendor of his palaces, gardens, *fêtes*, and other diversions, may be said to have composed a new court of all the opulent nobility and gentry of his kingdom; so also, by the etiquette which he introduced, he became the legislator not only of his own court,

noit un peu plus dans les plaisirs de la jeunesse, car il fut trois ou quatre fois au bal . . . Monseigneur avoit fait une partie avec la princesse de Conti d'y aller. Le roi ne l'approuva pas, disant, que jamais on n'alloit à ces sortes d'endroits, qu'il n'y eût quelque compte desagréable, et que les femmes d'un certain air n'y devoient pas aller."

* *Mad. de la Fayette*, p. 133. "Les bals de la cour etoient si tristes, qu'ils ne commencoient qu'après minuit et ils etoient toujours finis avant deux heures."

† *St. Simon*, III. p. 48, 49. VI. p. 27. "Avec elle s'éclipserent joie, plaisirs, amusements même, et toute espece de graces. Les ténébres convroient toute la surface de la cour."

but of most of the other courts of Europe. This etiquette was distinguished on the one hand by its exemption from all restraint, and on the other by its pomp or its solemnity. No other monarch granted his courtiers such free access to all the magnificence of his palaces and gardens; none was so solicitous to promote their pleasures, or facilitated the enjoyment of them by such gracious condescensions, and by so carefully avoiding all appearance of restraint;* finally, none levelled all distinctions of rank and thereby encouraged a reciprocally sociable disposition so much as Louis XIV.† At the same time, no prince was more ingenious in inventing new distinctions and new gradations of approach, solely and alone denoting the different degrees

* *La Bruyere*, p. 352. "Qu'il se fasse lui même une affaire de leurs plaisirs; qu'il ouvre son palais à ses courtisans; qu'il les admette jusque dans son domestique, que dans des lieux, dont la vue seule est un spectacle, il leur fasse voir d'autres spectacles, qu'il leur donne le choix des jeux, des concerts, et de tous les rafraichissements; qu'il y ajoute une chère splendide, et une entiere liberté, qu'il entra avec eux en societé des mêmes amusements; que le grand homme devienne aimable, et que le heros soit humain et familier, il n'aura pas assez fait."

† *St. Simon* I. p. 106. "Il retrancha tant qu'il put, les ceremonies et les distinctions, dont il ne retint que l'ombre, et certaines trop marquées pour les detruire, en semant mêmes dans celles-la des zizanies qui les rendoient en partie ridicules."

of his favour. From the rules which he had established, the gentlemen and ladies of his court knew perfectly well what apartments of the palace they might or might not enter unbidden; which of them might or might not be present when the monarch rose from bed, or retired to rest, when he dined and when he supped; which of them were allowed or prohibited to accompany the king in his excursions to Marly and Trianon, to attend him in his promenades, to participate in *fêtes*, to wear the costume of the court, to stand or sit at assemblies, to be covered during walks, or at table with the army.* In the etiquette which Louis XIV. introduced, that king, or his ministers had three different objects in view; in the first place, to render all the courtiers as nearly equal as they could, and yet to make as much distinction as possible between the classes created by the favour of the monarch; secondly, to release not only the king, but also his courtiers in their intercourse with each other, from all the disa-

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 156, 176. The ladies who were allowed no stools, had permission to sit down upon the floor, but without cushions, behind their princesses. At the king's table there was a *grand couvert, petit couvert, très-petit couvert*. Each had its distinct etiquette.

greeable restraints of etiquette;* and thirdly, to allow every one access to the king, and yet to preserve him from familiarity. High and low had liberty to address the king in going to mass, and in returning from it, when he was about to enter his carriage, or on other such like occasions. In these cases the petitioner was expected to state in a few words the nature of his application. The answers of the king were still shorter. He very seldom gave private audiences himself to ambassadors and generals previous to their departure, or on their arrival; and at the audiences of generals, Louvois was always present.†

* And yet in 1692, Mad. de Maintenon observed: "Il n'y a point dans les couvens austerités pareilles a celles, auxquelles l'etiquette de la cour assujettit les grands." *Lettres*, II. p. 180.

† The mere reception, introduction and announcing of the names of persons was such a difficult task for the duchess de Richelieu that she made continual blunders. On this subject Madame de Sevigné observes: "Cette place est dangereuse et fait voir, que les petites choses font plus de mal que l'etude de la philosophie. La recherche de la verité n'epuise pas tant une pauvre cervelle que tous les complimens et tous les riens dont celle-la est remplie." V. p. 446. Madame de Montespan occasioned the *filles d'honneur* to be dismissed, and *Dames du palais* to be substituted in their stead. The former were again appointed, in 1697, for the first dauphiness. *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 123. The duchess of Burgundy had only *dames du palais*. *Ibid.* IV. p. 110.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Accomplishments of the Female Sex during the Reign, and in particular at the Court, of Louis XIV.

During the reign of Louis XIV. France made a greater progress in the fine and useful arts than any other country in Europe. In the *belles lettres* and useful sciences, she was not excelled by any, England alone excepted. Flatterers, and even historians, ascribed to the haughty and successful monarch the merits of the artists and men of learning resident in his dominions, as they attributed to him the glory of the enterprizes of his generals and ministers. It was not before our times, that people began to be convinced that Louis XIV. had less share in the prosperity of the arts and sciences in the age called by his name, than Alexander the Great and Augustus, in the golden æras of art and genius, that were named

after them.* Pecuniary remunerations alone are not sufficient to stimulate and encourage genius; at least, when they are so small and so ill paid, and conferred as well on the worthless as the deserving, like the pensions granted by Louis XIV. to men of letters, both natives and foreigners. Louis himself possessed more slender attainments than any of his predecessors during the two preceding centuries;† and, among his ministers and confidants, there was not one single real connoisseur, not one passionate admirer of genuine art and science.‡ The king and his associates did not even conceive sentiments of respect for those artists and writers who immediately contributed to the pleasures of the court; and both would have produced greater master-pieces than they actually did, if they could have exerted their talents independent of the king and of the court. Excepting a few

* See the editor of the *Mémoires du duc de St. Simon*, I. p. 12, 13. *Duclos*, I. p. 197.

† The king once said to the duke de Vivonne: "Mais à quoi sert de lire?" "La lecture," replied the duke, "fait à l'esprit ce que vos perdrix font à mes joues." *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 52.

‡ Louvois piqued himself on never reading any book. This empty boast occasioned even a La Bruyere to pronounce a high panegyric on the all-powerful minister.

poets and preachers, all the other great writers of the time of Louis XIV. were either persecuted as the enemies of religion and of the state, or at least insulted and neglected.* The characters of poet and author found favour at the court of Louis XIV. only when they were seconded by birth and rank. Without these advantages, they were almost always the butt of ridicule, and the objects of contempt;† and a *bon mot*, or an entertaining story, was more highly valued than the most important works and inventions of mathematicians, philosophers, physi-

* For instance, Arnaud, Nicole, Pascal, Gassendi, Fenelon, &c. Racine died of grief, on account of the loss of the king's favour. *Lettres de la Comtesse de la Rivière*, II. p. 334, 5. III. p. 24. Colbert deprived Mezeray, the historian, of his pension, on account of his frankness. See *Preface des Mém. de Richelieu*, p. 70. and the *Mémoires* themselves, p. 270, 1. Among the great men who fell into disgrace, was also Vauban. Respecting the academies of Louis XIV. see the same work, I. p. 204, 5.

† *Suite des Caracteres et des Mœurs de ce Siecle*, II. p. 75. "Un merite abandonné de la fortune ne sert qu'à rendre celui en qui il se trouve plus ridicule. Les noms de Poëte, d'Auteur, de Savant, sont des titres injurieux, quand on ne jouit pas de ceux de la grandeur, ou qu'avec eux on est dans la bassesse. Ils etoient honorables à Monsieur le Comte de St. Aignan, à Monsieur de Bussi, à Monsieur le Prince: à mille autres on les donne par raillerie, ou les prodigue par mépris."

cians, and divines.* The pure light of genuine science diffused by the immortal geniuses at the conclusion of the seventeenth, and the commencement of the eighteenth century, did not penetrate into the palaces of the sovereign, or the mansions of the majority of the great in France; where, on the contrary, the enemies of liberty, virtue, and religion dictated the *ton*, and where superstition, false devotion, bigotry, and persecution, had taken up their abode.†

* *Suite des Caracteres et des Mœurs de ce Siecle*, II. p. 107. "Faites un compliment à propos, ayez à commandement quelques bon mots, donnez place dans une conversation à de jolis recits, remplissez des bouts rimez, hazardez un madrigal, un couplet de chanson, vous serez plus admiré que le geométre, le philosophe, le theologien; c'est le gout du monde."

† The belief in omens and predictions, apparitions and witchcraft, prevailed, or rather was revived at the court of Louis XIV. See *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 232. *Lettres de Mad. de Sevigné*, V. p. 347, 358, 469. *Lettres Nouvelles*, p. 23. *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 130. The disputes concerning Jansenism, Quietism, and the bull *Unigenitus*, are as incontestable demonstrations of the ignoranee that prevailed at the eourt of Louis XIV. as the revocation of the edict of Nantes, and the foreible conversion of the protestants, to which Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon were instigated, by the ministers Tellier, Louvois, and Chateauneuf, by the Pere de la Chaise, and even by the celebrated Bossuet. *Duclos*, I. p. 195. *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, III. p. 17. IV. p. 141. At an earlier period, Madame de Maintenon enjoined her brother to treat the Huguenots with indulgence.

During the reign of Louis XIV. the women of the higher ranks were not only more polished, but possessed more solid attainments than the men. The excellent moral and religious works of a Nicole, an Arnaud, and other members of the Port Royal, were so highly and so universally relished by the other sex, as even to supersede the novels and ro-

Lettres, I p. 72. "Have compassion," says she, "on people who are more unfortunate than criminal; they are in errors in which we have ourselves lived, and out of which violence would never have drawn us. Henry IV. and many other great princes professed the same religion. Forbear then to persecute them: the way to gain men is by lenity and kindness. Jesus Christ set us this example, and such is the intention of the king." These sentiments, indeed, she relinquished in the sequel, and very often exercised, as she thought, a salutary compulsion for the conversion of old, and more especially, of young heretics; but cruelty she always abhorred. Both Louvois and Pere de la Chaise represented to her, and to the king, that the extirpation of the heretics would not cost a single drop of blood. On this subject, peruse the following passages from the twentieth and twenty-first letter in the second volume, p. 89, 90. "M. de Chateauneuf proposed means which are not adapted to the end. Matters must not be pushed too far; we must convert, and not persecute. M. de Louvois advised lenient measures, which ill agree with his disposition, and his eagerness to bring matters to a conclusion. The king is much pleased with having put the finishing hand to the great work of the re-union of the heretics with the church. The Pere de la Chaise has promised that it shall not cost a drop of blood; and M. de Louvois says the same thing."

mances.* The duchess de Longueville augmented the institution of Port Royal; and, instead of the witty and the gallant circles to which she had been accustomed, she assembled around her, in the wing which she erected, or in her own hotel, a synod, as it were, of the most learned, the most pious, and the most virtuous men, who jointly discussed the grand truths of religion and morality, or powerfully impressed them upon every heart.† Even after the Port Royal was suppressed, and Jansenism was persecuted and punished as the greatest of crimes against the state, the marquise de Sevigné, her daughter, and their friends, were not to be deterred from perusing the instructive works of Arnaud, Nicole, and

* *Motteville*, I. p. 435. "And they would have gained the esteem of all the world, had they not incurred the reproach which may justly be alledged against them, that they taught the women of France in the most persuasive language, that they ought to leave off reading novels and romances," See also, the *Letters de la Rivière*, I. p. 407.

† *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 278. "An Arnauld, a Nicole, a le Maitre, a Herman, a Saci, and many others, who, though of less celebrity, were, however, men of great merit and reputation, assembled at her house. For the *bel esprit*, which the duchess de Longueville had acquired at the *Hôtel de Rambouillet*, they substituted solid conversation, and that energetic and animated way of thinking, which characterized both their works and their discourses.

their brethren, or from circulating them with the greatest secrecy.* It cannot be denied that Louis XIV. would have acted more wisely, had he chosen for his advisers the enlightened fair disciples of Port Royal, instead of arbitrary, short-sighted, and bigotted ministers and confessors.

Though the ladies of the court and capital no longer applied themselves with such general zeal to the ancient languages and literature, or to the sciences, in the strict acceptation of the term, still it must be admitted that, during the reign of Louis XIV. they not only possessed a more enlarged understanding, but likewise more extensive attainments than the courtiers; that they principally contributed to the improvement of the language, of the *bon ton* in society, and of good taste in composition; and that they set the best examples of wit, equally delicate, pleasing, and refined.

At the court of Louis XIV. and in the great world at Paris, the only men who gained celebrity by their poems, letters,

‡ *Lettres de M. de Sevigné*, V. p. 521. "Je leur (aux pauvres filles de St. Marie) ai fait prêter un livre dont elles sont charmées, c'est *la Frequence*; mais c'est le plus grand secret du monde."

novels, and memoirs, were the dukes de St. Aignan, St. Simon, Richelieu, and Noailles, the marquis de la Fare, the comtes de Bussy and Hamilton, and finally, Monsieur de Bachaumont; and among all these courtiers and men of the world, there was not a single first-rate writer, not one that can be compared with a cardinal de Retz, or a duke de Rochefoucault, or that exercised a powerful influence over the taste of his age. Very different is the result presented by the ladies of the court, and of the great world in the capital. The principal of the accomplished female writers of that age surpassed the men both in the number and in the fame of their works. Mesdames de Sevigne, de Grignan, de Simiané, (*a*) de Coulanges, (*b*) de la Fayette, (*c*) des Houlieres, (*d*) de Villars, (*e*) de Maintenon, (*f*) de la Sabliere, (*g*) de Villedieu, formerly Made-

(*a*) The letters of the daughter and grand-daughter of the marquise de Sevigné are to be found in the *Lettres nouvelles*. See also, *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 147.

(*b*) *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 110.

(*c*) *Histoire litter. des Femmes Franç.* I. p. 460. &c.

(*d*) *Ibid.* I. p. 516. (*e*) *Ibid.* I. p. 545, &c. (*f*) *Ibid.* I. p. 557, &c.

(*g*) *Voltaire Siècle de Louis XIV.* II. p. 411. Mademoiselle de Montpensier wronged Madame de la Sabliere, when she asserted that she was merely a *petite femme de*

moiselle des Jardins, (*h*) de Lambert, (*i*) d'Aulnoy, (*k*) de Caylus, (*l*) de Murat, (*m*) de Tencin, (*n*) de Gomez, (*o*) and Mesdemoiselles de l'Enclos, (*p*) Descartes, (*q*) de la Force, (*r*) Bernard, (*s*) de la Rucheguilhem, (*t*) Deshoulieres, (*u*) and de Lussan, (*x*) delighted and instructed not only France, but all civilized Europe, by their admirable letters, poems, novels, or historical productions.* None of these ladies, indeed, possessed such profound

la ville. V. p. 207. See *Lettres de Sevigné,* VI. p. 57, 58.

(*h*) *Hist. litt.* II. p. 1, &c. *Lettres de Bussy,* III. p. 363.

(*i*) *Ibid.* II. p. 75. (*k*) *Ibid.* II. p. 166, &c. (*l*) *Ibid.* II. p. 359.

(*m*) *Ibid.* II. p. 550. (*n*) *Ibid.* III. p. 288, &c. (*o*) *Ibid.* III. p. 466.

(*p*) *Ibid.* Many of her ingenious letters are inserted in the *Œuvres de St. Evremond.*

(*q*) *Hist. litt.* II. 149, &c. (*r*) *Ibid.* p. 307. (*s*) *Ibid.* II. p. 481.

(*t*) *Ibid.* p. 70. (*u*) *Ibid.* p. 157. (*x*) *Ibid.* III. p. 288.

* I omit a hundred other French authoresses who lived during the reign of Louis XIV. either because they were not so celebrated as those whom I have enumerated, or because they did not belong to the court or to the great world in Paris. Their names and an account of their works may be found in the first three volumes of the *Histoire litteraire de Femmes Françoises.* Thomas was but imperfectly acquainted with the *Siècle de Louis XIV.* when in his *Essai sur les Femmes* he observed, "Quoiqu'il en soit, les femmes sous Louis XIV. furent presque reduites à rougir de leurs connoissances."

erudition as Madame Dacier;* but many of them, at least, understood Latin and read the Roman authors with the same facility as the most learned of the men belonging to the court.†

The great number of accomplished females of quality during the reign of Louis XIV. is the more surprizing, as the parents were prevented by their residence at court, or in the capital, and the incessant occupations and diversions attached to it, from attending to the education of their children, and were therefore obliged to send their daughters into convents and their sons to schools or academies, till they could introduce them into the world.‡ Young fe-

* Concerning her life and works see *Hist. lit. des Femmes Franç.* II. p. 396, &c.

† For instance, Madame de Sevigné, de Grignan, de la Fayette, de Maintenon, de Fontevrauld, &c. Madame de Grignan was a zealous Cartesian. *Lettres de Sevigné*, VI. p. 41. The marquise de Chatelet was born, it is true, during the reign of Louis XIV. but her erudition and literary fame were not known and established till a later period.

‡ This is a subject of complaint with Madame de Scudery, one of the most accomplished female friends of the count de Bussy. *Lettres de Bussy*, III. p. 175. "You do right," says she, "not to educate them in that gross ignorance in which we were brought up. People may say what they please of the great book of the world, but it is necessary to read others to know how to profit by it; and I deeply lament that I was myself taught nothing."

males on their entrance into life, could not fail to be diverted from the cultivation of their minds, by the multiplicity and novelty of the pleasures, into the circle of which they were suddenly introduced, and by the example of the courtiers, most of whom were ignorant and illiterate. Nothing but extraordinary talents and an uncommon ardour for useful knowledge could enable them to withstand the example of the great world.

When we compare the superior number and talents of the female authors, with the inferiority in both respects of the poets and prose writers of the court of Louis XIV. it is impossible to withhold our astonishment that celebrated persons of both sexes should have regarded Moliere's comedy entitled *Les Femmes savantes*, as the cause of the scarcity and the concealment of learned and accomplished females. "Moliere," says Thomas,* "exaggerated the ludicrous part of the character of learned females, and thereby caused it to dis-

* *Essai sur les Femmes*, p. 130. He was probably misled by the marquise de Lambert, who, in the last inglorious years of Louis XIV. asserted that literary attainments were deemed ridiculous in women, and that Moliere had rendered them so. *Œuvres de Lambert*, p. 176, 177. She was reproached with holding *cotteries litteraires*. *Mém. de Maintenon*, I. p. 102.

appear. Some ladies afterwards devoted their attention to literature, and even to the sciences; but this was not the prevailing taste. In the most enlightened age, the other sex was not forgiven for seeking instruction. A love of literature was regarded in men of rank as a degradation, and in women as pedantry. Some ladies braved the force of prejudice, and it was imputed to them as a crime." Among the many accomplished females in the latter half of the sixteenth century, there was none but what sought to acquire honour, and actually did gain it by their superior attainments. The marquise de Lambert was the only one who was anxious to suppress some of her compositions printed against her will. Her motive for this, however, was not because literary talents drew down ridicule and contempt on ladies of quality, during the whole of the reign of Louis XIV. but because she had an extreme dread of the public opinion, and in particular of the sarcasms of the fashionable circles of Paris and of the court.* Of all the productions of Moliere, none obtained so little applause as *les Femmes savantes.* Some of the courtiers pro-

* *Prèf. des Œuvres de Mad. de Lambert.* p. 12, 13.

nounced the pedant a dry and uninteresting character. Others could not comprehend where Moliere could have studied the females who made pretensions to learning, and the latter added, that, in the whole piece there was not a word which could draw a smile either from the courtier or the public at large.* The piece would instantly have sunk into oblivion, had not the king observed, at the second representation, that it was a good play, and had given him great pleasure. It was not till after the king had pronounced this favourable opinion, that Moliere ventured to cause the *Femmes savantes* to be represented at Paris in 1672.

The *Precieuses ridicules* of the same author produced a much greater effect than the *Femmes savantes*. By the former Moliere first established his claim to the title of the legislator of decorum, which has been justly given him by Voltaire.†

* *Vie de Moliere*, p. 88. "Ou a-t-il été déterrer ces sortes des de femmes, sur lesquelles il a travaillé aussi serieusement que sur un bon sujet Il n'y a pas le mot pour rire à tout cela pour l'homme de cour et pour le peuple." A very judicious opinion is given in the *Lettres de Bussy*, IV. p. 47.

† *Siecle de Louis XIV.* T. II. p. 186. "Il contribua a defaire le public de l'affectation des femmes precieuses. Moliere fut, si on ose le dire, un legislateur des bienseances du monde."

The imitation and exaggeration of the far-fetched and unusual language of the *Hotel de Rambouillet* had arrived at the highest pitch of extravagance about the time that Moliere wrote his farce,* and had spread from the court to the capital, and from the capital over the provinces. The first representations of the *Precieuses ridicules* put an end to this affectation in language and wit, at court and among the higher classes in the capital.† "I was present," says Menage,‡ "at the first representation of the *Precieuses ridicules*, with Mademoiselle de Rambouillet and all the other persons who frequented the *Hotel de Rambouillet*. The piece obtained unbounded applause, and for my part, I was highly delighted with it, because I then foresaw the effects which it was likely to produce. On leaving the theatre, I took

* See *Vie de St. Evremond*, I. p. 44. and *La Bruyere*, p. 175, 177. "We beheld not long since a society of persons of both sexes, united by conversation and the commerce of the understanding. They left to the vulgar the art of speaking in an intelligible manner. An observation by no means clearly expressed led to another still more obscure, which was succeeded by absolute enigmas. They had at length arrived at such perfection that nobody understood them, and that they did not even understand themselves."

† The first representation of this piece was in November 1659.

‡ *Menagiana*, p. 232.

my friend Chapelain by the hand, and said to him, "You, my friend, and myself, joined in the follies which are now so happily turned into ridicule. To borrow the language of St. Remy to king Clovis,—we must now burn what we once worshipped, and worship what we formerly burned. What I predicted was actually accomplished. Immediately after the representation, the bombastic and obscure language which had been satirized in the play, fell into disuse."

This return to the paths of unsophisticated nature produced a total revolution in the language and taste of the French nation. People conceived such a predilection for what was simple and unaffected, both in the language of conversation, and in the plan and composition of literary productions, as to prefer a certain degree of negligence to the slightest appearance of studied refinement in style or ideas.* The love of the simple and natural likewise produced a distate of the endless

* *Suite des Caracteres et des mocurs de Mons. de la Bruyere*, II. p. 89. "Tout cela n'est plus à la mode. On aime la simplicité; ce qui est tant soit peu eloigné n'a point la vogue. Peut-être même ne serai-je pas au gout nouveau, pour n'avoir pas dit d'une maniere plus naturelle, qu'aujourdhui la mode étoit de se reunir sur les façons de s'exprimer, au lieu qu'anciennement la singularité étoit recherchée des beaux esprits."

novels of Mademoiselle Scuderi. The complicated and wonderful adventures, the sentiments and characters strained to the highest pitch of extravagance, and the pompous language of these and other romances of chivalry, which were before so enthusiastically admired, were now thought tedious, if not ridiculous. The *Zaide* and the *Princesse de Cleve* of the countess de la Fayette, were the first models of the more modern novels in which the sentiments, characters, actions, and occurrences were equally natural.* To the favourite works of the fashionable world during the reign of Louis XIV. belonged Fairy-tales, in which species of composition count Hamilton and Madame d'Aunoy far surpassed all their rivals and imitators. In these also the language and sentiments were consistent with nature; and though the characters and adventures far exceeded the bounds of nature and probability, it was not designed that the reader should think them either natural or probable, since it was the intention of the author rather

* Madame de la Fayette was the most intimate female friend of the celebrated duke de la Rochefoucault, who was her assistant, or at least her adviser in the composition of her novels, especially the *princesse de Cleve*. *Lettres de Bussy*, I. p. 265, 275.

to amuse his fancy with new and brilliant images, than to affect his heart by extraordinary scenes. Racine was more natural in his tragedies than Corneille, who always retained a tincture of the language, sentiments, and way of thinking of his youth; and Quinault was much more natural in his operas than the Italian poets whom he imitated. What rendered Moliere the favourite of the court and of the nation, was, because the language, characters, sentiments, and situations in his best pieces were more natural than those of the preceding, and indeed, most of the subsequent dramatic writers of France.

The natural presupposes rather the absence of a fault than the presence of an excellency. It is not a virtue unless when combined with an agreeable ease, or with grace, or with delicacy and warmth of ideas and sentiments. All these amiable qualifications were possessed in a far superior degree by the literary females, than by the literary men of the age of Louis XIV.

Ease in the natural expression of ideas and sentiments, is as pleasing as in the notions of the body, and in every other action. To discover the difference between natural simplicity and graceful ease,

let any one compare the letters of a Ninon de l'Enclos, a Sevigné, a Grignan, a Simiane, a Coulanges, a Caylus, or a Maintenon with those of a Bussy and St. Evremond. The former, without exception, are not only natural, but also easy; and the smooth flow of words and ideas is one of the principal sources of the pleasure received from their perusal. The letters of Bussy and St. Evremond are natural, but are not, in general, written with that ease which is so conspicuous in the letters of the above-mentioned ladies. But if the men did not attain that degree of ease in literary composition by which the ladies were characterized; yet a certain ease in the motions of the body, and indeed, in the general demeanor, was considered a sign by which a courtier might be infallibly distinguished from persons who had not lived in the great world.

Ease is a component part of grace, or, at any rate, in most cases, grace presupposes ease. Grace, however, is much more than ease, difficult, nay, almost impossible, as it is to pronounce wherein it actually consists. In adult persons, grace is not to be found without the talent and the desire to please, to give and to enjoy innocent pleasures, though these do not

comprehend the whole essence of grace. The Graces had not endowed any person at the court of Louis XIV. so richly with their most fascinating and secret charms, as the princess Henrietta of England, the first wife of the duke of Orleans, the only brother of the king; and Adelaide of Savoy, duchess of Burgundy, who became dauphiness on the decease of the first dauphin. Henrietta of England was, shortly before her marriage, at least, so meagre that the king rallied his brother on the subject, and yet she was more pleasing than the finest women of the court.* The princess was even somewhat crooked, but the graces diffused over her whole person so completely diverted the notice of the dazzled spectator from this natural infirmity, that she was admired for the beauty of her figure.† According to the testimony of her biographer and friend,

* *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 41. "Le roi disoit à Monsieur, qu'il ne devoit se presser d'aller epouser des os des Saints Innocens. Il est vrai que Madame etoit extremement maigre; on ne sauroit en même tems disconvenir qu'elle ne fût très aimable."

† *Ibid.* V. p. 41. "Elle avoit si bonne grace à tout ce qu'elle faisoit et etoit si honnête que tous ceux qui approchoient en étoient satisfaits. Elle avoit trouvé le secret de se faire louer sur sa belle taille, quoiqu'elle fût bossue, et Monsieur même ne s'en apperçut qu'après l'avoir epousée."

the countes de la Fayette, she possessed the talent of pleasing, and what the French denominate *graces*, in the highest degree. Fascinating charms adorned her mind, her whole person, and her every action. Never was a princess endowed with such qualifications for commanding the homage of her own sex and the love of the other.*

If Henrietta of England was equalled or excelled by any person during the age of Louis XIV. it was by the duchess of Burgundy alone. Adelaide of Savoy was not a regular beauty any more than Henrietta. The defects of her person were likewise concealed beneath the veil of the graces, or rather, converted into charms. The most painful restraint seemed to cost her not the least effort. Her affability was natural, and so inexhaustible, that she possessed sufficient for the whole court. She was extremely plain, had pendent cheeks, a very prominent forehead, a small nose, and thick lips. Her hair and eyebrows were of a chesnut colour; her eyes were very beautiful and expressive; but the few teeth she had were decayed. On the

* *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre*, in the 8th volume of *Œuvres de Mad. de la Fayette*, p. 37, 38.

contrary, her complexion was exceedingly fair, her bosom small, but admirably formed, her neck long, and with a commencing wen, which was not at all unseemly. She carried her head with equal grace and majesty. Her smile was inexpressibly fascinating, her shape perfect, her gait like that of a goddess upon clouds. Her whole figure was irresistibly pleasing. Graces attended her steps, her gestures, and every word that fell from her lips. An air of simplicity and *naïveté*, superior intelligence, and a peculiar ease, not only captivated, but were communicated to every one that approached her. She wished to please the meanest and most insignificant, without appearing in the least to be desirous of pleasing. Her juvenile vivacity caused her to take a part in every thing; and, agile as a nymph, or as the wind, which is present in several places at once, she every where diffused spirits and animation. She was the ornament of all spectacles, the soul of all *fêtes*, diversions, and balls, at the latter of which she gave particular delight, by the excellence of her dancing. She was fond of play: she could amuse herself with playing for small sums, because every thing amused her; but she preferred high play, and in this

also she proved herself the most amiable of women. Notwithstanding the vivacity of her disposition, and her propensity to pleasure, she was accustomed to employ herself in the company of her elderly ladies of honour, in reading serious works, or in other occupations.* In the presence of the king and Madame de Maintenon, she said and did things which would never have been forgiven any other person, but which being said and done by her, were transformed into the most amiable *naïvetés*.†

Grace, in general, at least in that degree in which it was possessed by Henrietta, of England, and Adelaide, of Savoy, is the gift of heaven, which cannot be obtained by human exertions any more than perfect beauty, or the genius of a Cæsar, or of a Newton. As those princesses were endowed in such a superior manner with the talent of pleasing, the gentlemen and ladies of the court strove

* "On s'adonne," observes Madame de Maintenon, in the year 1709, in a letter to Madame de Dangeau, VII. p. 67. "dans la ruelle de Mad. la duchesse de Bourgogne à faire de l'esprit . . . on y parle de logique, de rhetorique, de physique . . . la princesse apprenoit hier à faire des argumens. On y projette une Academie des femmes : elle sera de quarante," &c.

† *St. Simon*, VI. p. 14, &c.

to form themselves after those inimitable models, and in particular, to copy as closely as possible that ease which appeared in their whole demeanor, their universal affability, and constant vivacity. From this emulation arose the characteristic politeness of the court of Louis XIV.* and the easy and decorous manners of the great world, which were opposed to the *manieres bourgeoises*.† The courts of the two fascinating princesses became the principal abodes of elegant pleasures, and the best schools of good company, the *ton* of which was gradually diffused through the other circles at court, but was again extinguished during the last

* *Œuvres de Mad. de Lambert*, p. 21. "Politeness is a desire to please those with whom we are obliged to live, and to behave in such a manner as to give satisfaction to every body; to our superiors by our respect, to our equals by our esteem, and to our inferiors by our kindness. In a word, it consists in paying attention to please, and to say just what we ought to every person we speak to." The fair writer makes a distinction between *politesse d'esprit* and *politesse des manieres*.

† The Parisians themselves were not always successful in their attempts to imitate the court. *La Bruyere*, I. p. 219. "Paris, which generally apes the court, cannot always copy its manners. It by no means imitates the court in that flattering and agreeable behaviour with which certain courtiers, and the ladies in particular, naturally treat a man of merit."

gloomy years of the reign of Louis XIV.*

Less rare than the enchanting grace of the princess Henrietta, of England, and of the duchess of Burgundy, was a certain delicacy of wit and ideas, manifested alike in praise and in flattery, in jest and in raillery, in telling a story or in making reflections. On account of this refinement of wit and ideas, the works of Balzac and Voiture were highly esteemed, even in the best period of the reign of Louis XIV.† By the same recommendation, the count Bussy-Rabutin, the chevalier de Grammont,‡ the duke de Vivonne, brother of Madame

* *Siècle de Louis XIV.* II. p. 23. "The taste of society had not attained its highest perfection at the court. The princess of England brought to the court the charms of interesting and animated conversation, kept up by the perusal of good books, and by a sound and delicate taste. She inspired a new emulation, and introduced at court a politeness and graces, of which the rest of Europe had scarcely any idea." *La Bruyere*, I. p. 411. "The agreeable conversations, the circles, delicate pleasantry, sprightly and familiar letters, and the little parties to which wit and good sense were a sufficient introduction, have all disappeared."

† *Lettres de Bussy*, II. p. 200. "Les epitres de Balzac et de Voiture, qui toutes font les delices de ceux qui ont de l'esprit. *Lettres de Mad. de Sevigné*, VI. p. 220. *La Bruyere*, I. p. 87 "Je ne sais si l'on pourra jamais mettre dans les lettres plus d'esprit, plus de tour, plus d'agrément et plus de stile que l'on voit dans celles de Balzac et de Voiture."

‡ See *Lettres de St. Evremond.*

de Montespan,* and the marquis de Grignan ;† and among the ladies, Mesdames de Sevigné, de Grignan, de Simiane, de Coulanges,‡ de Cornuel,§ de Nangis,‖ and de Caylus ;¶ but, above all, the three beautiful and accomplished sisters, Madame de Montespan, de Thiange, and de Fontevraud,** acquired celebrity during the reign of Louis XIV. "Soon after the marquise de Montespan was taken into favour, the queen of abbesses, Madame de Fontevraud, was seen quitting her nunnery, appearing with her veil, and the fetters of the convent, at court, where she took part like her elder

* *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 52, 53.

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 293. "Je voudrois sçavoir où il prend ces sortes de pensées et ces tours nobles et galans qui font d'une satyre la chose du monde la plus obligeante." And again, p. 326. "Voilà justement de ces choses qui lui viennent quand il parle et quand il ecrit ; c'est ce qui fait que ses lettres font toujours deux mois durant l'ornement de toutes les poches."

‡ *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 109, 110. "Elle avoit une facilité singuliére à dire des chose fines et heureuses, c'est ce qu'on appeloit ses epigrammes." In another place Madame de Sevigné observes : "Que l'esprit de Madame de Coulanges etoit une dignité."

§ None was more celebrated for her *bon mots*. See *Lettres de Sevigné*, II. p. 49. IV. p. 32, 33, 277, 318.

‖ *St. Simon*, II. p. 153, 154. III. p. 100.

¶ See her Letters.

** *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 52, 53. *St. Simon*, II. p. 5, &c. and 81, 82.

sister, Madame de Thiange, in all the entertainments and diversions. The house of Madame de Montespan was the centre of the whole court, of all the pleasures, the happiness, the hopes, and the terrors of the ministers and generals. It was likewise the centre of wit, but of a wit so natural, so prepossessing, so delicate, and characteristic, that it could not fail to be known by its originality. All the three sisters had infinite stores of this wit, and also possessed the art of imparting it to others.* This simple and charming turn of mind is still remarked with delight in the persons whom they educated, or with whom the were connected. They may be discovered in the most common conversation among a thousand others. Madame de Fontevraud possessed the largest portion of these superior family qualifications. She was likewise the most beautiful of the three sisters, and combined with these advantages uncom-

* *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 52. "C'étoit celui de ces trois soeurs, qui toutes trois en avoient infiniment et avoient l'art d'en donner aux autres . . . Les quatres personnes plaisoient universellement par un tour singulier de conversation, mélé de plaisanterie, de naïveté et de finesse qu'on appeloit l'esprit de Mortemar. Elles ecrivaient toutes avec une legereté et une grace particuliére."

mon and extensive erudition. She was profoundly versed in the sacred writings, the works of the fathers, and divinity; and was intimately acquainted with the learned languages. The superiority of her understanding could not be concealed; but so unobtrusive were her attainments, that no one would have suspected her of knowing more than the generality of her sex. She wrote admirably, be the subject and the form of her compositions whatever they might. She had particular talents for the station she occupied, being adored by her nuns, and at the same time keeping up the strictest discipline among them. Her residence at court was no farther injurious to her reputation than from the singular circumstance, that she might have enjoyed in the habit of her order the same favour as her sister. If this could at any time have been deemed becoming, she would never, even at court, have transgressed the laws of decorum."

Madame de Thiange governed her two sisters, and even the king, to whom she was more attached than to them. She retained her power over the monarch even after Madame de Montespan was supplanted in his affections. The latter was malicious, capricious, and haughty, even

towards the king. The gentlemen of the court were not fond of walking under her window. This was called running the gantlet, an expression which became proverbial. Madame de Montespan attacked every body, and very often with no other view than to amuse the king. As she possessed an inexhaustible fund of wit, and in particular, a talent for raillery, nothing was more dangerous than the reflections which she cast on all persons without distinction. Madame de Montespan retained her beauty till the latest moment of her life.* She was never ill, but fancied that she was always indisposed, and that she should not live long. Her uneasiness on this subject kept her in continual motion from place to place. In these journies she had always seven or eight persons in her company. Of these she was always the most amiable, and on this account, her fits of pride and caprice were overlooked. It was impossible for any one to have more wit, more refined politeness, more characteristic turns, and greater eloquence than she. All these formed an original and enchanting language, which she communicated through

* *Siècle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 81.

her society to such a degree, that her nieces and all her attendants who were brought up by her appropriated it to themselves; as may still be perceived in the few surviving persons that once belonged to the circle of Madame de Montespan.

The talents of the house of Mortemar, which chiefly reposed on the three celebrated sisters, and which they communicated, in a greater or less degree, to their friends and acquaintance, Thomas has attempted, but imperfectly and obscurely, to describe.* 'Under Louis XIV.' says he, 'another kind of talent was very common, at least among the ladies of the court; that amiable and pleasing talent, which is not spoiled by erudition, which is so far from being oppressive, that it excites no jealousy; which is fertile in charming trifles, and even rises as high as the composition of pretty verses; which, without pretensions, delights and enlivens, humbles nobody, and pleases all, and obtains indulgence even when it pleases most, because every one is sensible that it was unintentional.'*

* The names of the ladies who, in the opinion of Thomas, were animated by this spirit, evince that this writer was very imperfectly acquainted with the characters of the ladies who flourished during the reign of Louis

Even those who allowed the letters of Balzac and Voiture a delicacy of ideas in general, and of wit in particular, acknowledged that they were destitute of real sentiments. "Genuine sentiments," says La Bruyere, "did not begin to prevail till after the times of those writers, and these are to be ascribed solely and alone to

XIV. "Tel fut comme on sçait l'esprit des la Fayette, des Ninon, des la Suze, des la Sabliere et des Sevigné, des Thiange et des Montespan, de la duchesse de Bouillon, et de la belle Hortense Mancini sa soeur, enfin de Madame de Maintenon, lorsque jeune encore elle faisoit le charme de Paris." Old St. Evremond, who was in love with the duchess de Mazarin, extolled her not only as the most perfect pattern of beauty and personal charms, but also of understanding and talents. Madame de la Fayette gives a very different description of her. See *Histoire de Mad. Henriette d'Angleterre*, p. 29. "She was not only the most beautiful of the cardinal's nieces, but one of the most perfect beauties of the court. She wanted nothing but wit and talents to be an accomplished woman, and to give her that vivacity of which she was destitute." Neither did the duchess de Bouillon possess the talent of which Thomas speaks. It is not known that Madame de la Sabliére possessed such a qualification. Madame de la Suze ought not to have been named at all. Madame de Sevigné possessed ease and wit, but not of that graceful kind peculiar to the family of Mortemar. She frequently suffered herself to be carried away by the too great vivacity of her wit and humour, as the author of the life prefixed to her letters cannot deny. In the correspondence between the count de Bussy and Madame de Sevigné, there are many expressions which would scarcely have been used in the circles of the sisters of the family of Mortemar. See *Lettres de Bussy*, I. p. 130, 131, 133, 151, 187, 190, 195.

ladies. The other sex has arrived at much greater perfection in this kind of writing than we. Women hit at once upon words and phrases, which with us are the result of long labour and fatiguing research. They are so happy in the choice of expressions, and employ them so appropriately, that, even if they are ever so trite, they have the charm of novelty, and seem to have been made for the particular occasion on which they are used. None but women possesses the talent of expressing a whole sentiment in a single word, and of clothing an elegant idea in elegant attire. In the succession of their ideas, which follow each other without constraint, and are connected merely by the sense, they are inimitable. If the ladies were always correct, I should say, that the letters of some of them are the most perfect compositions in our language."* La Bruyere doubtless alluded to the letters of Madame de Sevigné, her daughter, and friends. "Madame de Sevigné," says a celebrated author, "wrote her letters without art, on the spur of the occasion, and in these letters composed, without being aware of it, an enchanting

* P. 87.

work. In her flowery style, she creates almost a new language. She elicits almost every moment expressions which wit does not produce, and which a soul endued with sensibility can alone invent. She gives emphasis and animation to the most common words; all her turns are like motions, which, though negligent, are so much the more graceful. The moments which she chuses are fixed by her pencil, and they are still present to our view. How she accuses, or commends, or pities herself! How sweet is her joy, how charming her grief! How she interests all nature for her tenderness!—If a being existed that was a stranger to genuine sensibility, let the letters of Madame de Sevigné be put into his hands for his perusal.*"

Thus it appears, that all the good qualities of the mind and of social intercourse, which distinguished the court and age of Louis XIV. natural simplicity and ease, the desire of pleasing, delicacy of wit, warmth of sentiment, elegance in language and literary composition, originated either wholly or principally with

* *Thomas*, p. 136.

ladies, and were communicated by them to the other sex, not only of their own nation, but of many other countries. Very few of their contemporaries remarked and calculated the number and the importance of the services performed by the most amiable and accomplished females Nevertheless, an indistinct impression of the benefits received from the fair authors of the greatest ornaments and pleasures of social life, produced, even in the age of Louis XIV. this conviction, that youth and men in general can only be formed in the company of ladies for the world and social intercourse, and that no where else can the pleasing qualities by which we recommend ourselves to others be acquired. During the regency of the queen-mother, men of letters and authors were the principal patterns and judges of correct and elegant language. The court itself was obliged to speak and write as Balzac and Voiture spoke and wrote, and according to the decisions of the French academy. Under Louis XIV. the French language was cultivated at court chiefly through the zeal and the example of ladies, with such assiduity, that the language of the court became the standard of correctness and

elegance, both in speaking and writing,* from which even the greatest authors durst not venture to deviate. The language of the court was so different from the language of the provinces, that when ladies who belonged to the great world visited persons of their own rank, who had passed all their lives in the country, what they heard there seemed to be a quite new and distinct language.† As early as the reign of Louis XIV. the courtiers were reproached with frivolity. This reproach, so far as it was well-founded, was not brought upon them by the ladies whom they were most solicitous to please, and whose favour they deemed the greatest of honours; but, on the contrary, the

* Corbinelli, a friend of Madame de Sevigné and her whole circle, submitted to the eount de Bussi a number of expressions used synonimously, for a more accurate investigation of their meaning. Bussi eonsulted his daughter, Madame de Colligny, and her opinions were adopted. *Lettres de Bussy*, I. p. 304, 311. "Nous (M. de Bussy, et l'evéque d'Autun) dissions, que le bon air attiroit respect. Ma fille a trouvé qu'il falloit mettre l'estime, et nous y avons souscrit. Pour moi j'avois jugé le bon sens et de jugement la même chose; Madame de Colligny vouloit, que le bon sens regardast les pensées et les expressions, et le jugement la eonduite. M. d'Autun a été pour elle et cela m'a fait revenir."

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 488. "Nous fumes deux heures avee eette eompagnie, sans nous ennuyer par la nouveauté d'une eonversation, et d'une langue entierement nouvelle pour nous."

fault lay in the wretched education and instruction received by young gentlemen in the colleges or academies, in their early initiation into the military service, or that of the court, and in the incessant dissipations of the court and capital, which left persons of shallow minds neither inclination nor leisure for serious occupations. Had the courtiers imitated the ladies in all that was good and commendable, they would have endeavoured to acquire not only agreeable, but likewise useful qualifications; they would not have placed the highest perfection of man in the talent of pleasing alone, or of affording entertainment by means of bon mots, diverting stories, and pretty verses; they would not have confined their knowledge merely to a few amusing fashionable publications, or to the contents of their pocket-book; and still less would they have slighted serious reflection as ridiculous, or shunned it as fatiguing. How much the necessity and the taste for society and social pleasures had increased during the reign of Louis XIV. may be inferred from a comparison of the works designed for the amusement of the great world, published during and previous to his reign.

The novels of Mademoiselle Scuderi

consisted of several thick volumes; and, during the regency of Anne of Austria, they were read by ladies as well as gentlemen with the greatest avidity. All the performances of a similar description that appeared in the time of Louis XIV. formed one or two small volumes. For men, who lived rather for others, and with others, than for and by themselves, brevity became an essential requisite, and prolixity an unpardonable fault in all works, whether they were designed to afford entertainment or instruction.

CHAPTER V.

Of the Gallantry of the Court of Louis XIV.

After the death of cardinal Mazarin, a professed woman-hater, it was universally hoped, that the golden age of gallantry, such as tradition described the reigns of Francis I. and Henry IV. would be revived. Nothing was more natural, and to all appearance more well-founded, than this hope. The throne was occupied by a youthful monarch, who surpassed all his courtiers in personal beauty, and all his predecessors in power, revenues, liberality, and love of splendour, and whose propensity to the fair sex was, at least, as strong as any king of France had ever manifested. This amiable and adored sovereign assembled around him a more numerous and brilliant court than had ever been seen in Europe; and the greatest ornament of this court was a train of females, so beautiful, so sensible, and so

accomplished, that had even gallantry been before a stranger to our division of the globe, it would seem that it could not have failed to spring up at the court of Louis XIV. Accordingly, his contemporaries and posterity have praised Louis XIV. as a pattern and teacher, and his court as the seat or the school of refined gallantry. General report affirmed, that he was initiated into the principles of gallantry at the court of his mother and the countess de Soissons, by birth a Mancini, who was the first that made an impression on his susceptible and yet uncorrupted heart.* This gallantry he farther ennobled by the dignity and majesty that were diffused over his whole person, and over all his actions.

If Louis XIV. ever practised the gallantry of ancient chivalry, it was only for a short period. Upon the whole, he was

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 8. "Ce fut dans cet important et brillant tourbillon, où le roi se jetta d'abord, et où il prit cet air de politesse et de galanterie qu'il a su toujours conserver, et qu'il a su si bien allier avec la decence et la majesté." And again, p. 155. "Rien n'etoit pareil dans ses revües et fêtes à sa galanterie quand il y avoit des dames. Il avoit pris ce ton à la cour de sa mere, et chez la comtesse de Soissons; ses maitresses l'y avoient accoutumé de plus en plus." Voltaire, in his *Siecle de Louis XIV.* Tom. II. p. 399, repeats these circumstances and opinions.

one of the least gallant of all the monarchs, and his court one of the least gallant of all the courts that have been seen in France during the two last centuries.

Louis XIV. behaved with politeness to every one, and consequently to the ladies. This politeness he carried to such a length, that he never passed a female, not even any of the inferior attendants on the court, in his walks or rides, without taking off his hat. He never said a harsh thing to any person, and of course not to a woman; on the contrary, he frequently said handsome or agreeable things to persons of both sexes. In the course of his amours, he often did what a monarch who loved justice and virtue would not have done. But it was very rarely that he forgot what he owed to his dignity and majesty; and his high notions of these, combined with a natural dryness, were the principal cause that he did not display the same kind of gallantry as Francis I. and Henry IV. though he better deserved the title of a slave of love, than his two illustrious predecessors.

Louis displayed a tincture of the gallantry of chivalry only in his first amours

with the two Mancini's,* and, after his marriage, with the tender La Valliere.† Even in these intrigues, the young king acted the part of a timid and amorous swain, rather than that of a gallant knight. During his passion for La Valliere, the only appearance of chivalrous gallantry he exhibited was, in the respectful silence observed by the king and the whole court to the young queen, who was pregnant, concerning the splendid *fêtes* given by the monarch in honour of the unknown object of his attachment.‡ If Louis had learned so much of refined gallantry as he possessed of any lady, it was neither of his mother, nor in the house of his first mistress, the countess de Soissons, but in the society of Henrietta, of England, whose company he courted for some time after her marriage, as much as he had before shunned and turned her into ridicule.§ The mere suspicion that the marquis de Villequier was not indifferent to his mistress, extinguished all his passion for the

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, I. p. 153.

† *Ibid.* p. 162.

‡ On this same occasion, Madame de Motteville observes, V. p. 279: "Ce qu'on appelle ordinairement la belle galanterie produisit alors beaucoup d'intrigues."

§ *Motteville*, as above, and *de la Fayette Hist. de Henriette d'Angleterre.*

elder Mancini, previous to her marriage with the count de Soissons. After this marriage it was impossible that the flame could be rekindled, as the king positively knew that the marquis de Vardes was the professed and favoured lover of the countess.*

The same Louis, who denied to no female the usual marks of exterior respect, and never offended or hurt the feelings of a lady by a harsh word, felt so little genuine respect for the sex, and shewed it so little indulgence, that he treated the ladies of his court as though they were slaves whom he had purchased. In his excursions, the ladies of his court, nay, even his mistress and the princesses of the blood, were obliged to attend him in all seasons, and in all weathers, however ailing or ill they might be. In his journies, he enjoyed for his own person every convenience that he could possibly procure; while, on the other hand, none of the ladies durst detain the king a single moment, or put him in the least out of his ordinary track. The high sense he entertained of his majesty, and a natural dryness of disposition, produced in him

* *De la Fayette*, p. 19, 20.

taciturnity and reserve.* The less he contributed to the amusement of others, the more he expected others to exert themselves for his amusement; and in this consisted the greatest art which his mistresses were obliged to practise, and the most difficult task they had to perform. Madame de Montespan poured her complaints on the efforts which it cost her to amuse the king into the bosom of her friend, Madame de Maintenon; and, notwithstanding all the prudence and patience which Madame de Maintenon had acquired in the difficulties which she had to encounter in life, she found herself unable to suppress similar lamentations.

Of all the females to whom Louis XIV. was attached, none was so successful in dispelling the *ennui* of the king, and none endured the pressure of that *ennui* with such patience and fortitude as Madame de Maintenon. It was to this same mysterious female, that Louis behaved with such gallantry, as not only to lose

* *De la Fayette Hist. de Henriette d'Anglet.* p. 14. "On le trouvera un des plus honnêtes hommes de son royaume, et l'on pourroit dire le plus parfait s'il n'etoit point si avare de l'esprit que le ciel lui a donné, et qu'il voulut le laisser paroitre tout entier sans le renfermer si fort dans la majesté de son rang."

sight of his pride, but even of the dignity of his illustrious station.

"During the splendid review at Compiégne," says the duke de St. Simon,* "the king exhibited to his whole army, and an innumerable concourse of people, a spectacle of a different kind, which forty years hence, I should be able to describe as accurately as at the present moment, so indelibly is it impressed on my mind. Madame de Maintenon was in her sedan-chair, at a point of the old rampart of Compiégne, which commanded an excellent view of the subjacent plain, and of the position and movements of the troops. On the fore-part of the left pole sat the duchess of Burgundy, and on the hinder part, the duchess of Maine and the princess of Conti; the ladies and gentlemen of the court forming a semi-circle in the rear. On the right side, at the window of the sedan, stood the king, and behind him, at some distance, the principal men of the realm. The king was almost the whole time uncovered, and stooped every moment to the window, to explain to Madame de Maintenon the nature and causes of every thing she saw. When

* II. p. 128, &c. Compare also, *Duclos*, I. p. 191.

the king wanted to speak to her, she opened the window four or five inches, but never so much as half. She several times opened it to ask questions of the king. The greatest part of the time, however, Louis stooped, unasked, to inform her of all that passed. Sometimes she did not observe him, and then the king would knock at the window that it might be opened. The king spoke to no other person but Madame de Maintenon; excepting a few orders, which he gave in a few words, and some answers equally laconic to the duchess of Burgundy, who endeavoured to draw him into conversation, and with whom Madame de Maintenon spoke by signs, without letting down the other window, through which the princess was not permitted to transmit her observation or replies. Opposite to the litter, steps had been cut in the rampart, and an opening made in the wall that persons might ascend from below, if necessary, to take the orders of the king. The case actually occurred. Crenan sent Canillac, the colonel of the regiment de Bourgogne, one of those which defended the place, to the king, to enquire his pleasure respecting some circumstance or other. Canillac climbed till his head

and shoulders projected above the wall and rampart. Having ascended thus far, he had a view of the sedan, the king, and the whole company surrounding it, objects, none of which he had before perceived. This spectacle filled the colonel with such astonishment that he stood like a statue, with open mouth, fixed eyes, and the expression of the utmost surprise depicted in his countenance. There was not one of the company but what observed this. The king was so struck that he peevishly said, "come hither, Canillac! What can be the matter with you?" Canillac ascended to the top, approached the king with slow and trembling steps, and looked wildly round on every side. I was only three paces from the king. Canillac passed in front of me and stammered a few words in a whisper to the king. "What do you say?" asked the monarch. "Speak out." The man could not recover from his confusion, and attempted to explain his errand as well as his embarrassment would permit him. The king understood scarcely a word; he declared that he should not be able to make any thing of Canillac, gave such an answer as he thought fit, and dismissed the colonel with these words: *Allez, Mon-*

sieur. Canillac did not give him occasion to repeat the injunction: he hastily descended by the way he had come, and disappeared. As soon as he was out of sight, the king looked round him and said: "I can't tell what could ail Canillac. He had lost his wits so as not to know what he was saying." No one made any reply. About the time that the town desired to capitulate, Madame de Maintenon had probably requested permission to retire. The king called out; *Les porteurs de Madame*. The chairmen came and carried Madame de Maintenon away. About a quarter of an hour afterwards, the king likewise withdrew. Many conversed in a low tone with each other, and were unable to recover from the surprise occasioned by what they had seen. The very soldiers enquired the meaning of the sedan, and the continual inclination of the king towards it. The greatest art was required to impose silence on the officers and men. It is easy to conceive what an effect this circumstance must have produced on the foreigners who were present. Report blazed it throughout all Europe as generally as the magnificent review of Compiégne."

The king's brother had not more, but

on the contrary, much less gallantry than Louis XIV. Monsieur was too deeply in love with himself to endeavour to please the fair sex.* His beauty was of a feminine character. His disposition was not less womanish, if we except the extraordinary personal valour, which he displayed in war. He dressed like a woman, used rouge and cosmetics, slept in a woman's cap, and conceived more tender sentiments towards persons of his own sex, than towards the fairest of the other.† He treated his amiable consort with a cruelty which excites the strongest abhorrence. Even during her last illness, he often said the most unpleasant things in her hearing. One day, speaking of astrology, he observed, that an astrologer had predicted that he should have several wives. "Madame's present condition," added he, "makes me believe that the man prophe-

*_Madame de la Fayette_, p. 12. "Il etoit beau et bien fait, mais d'une beauté et d'une taille plus convenable à une princesse, qu'à un prince, aussi avoit-il plus sougé à faire admirer sa beauté de tout le monde, qu'à s'en servir pour se faire aimer des femmes, quoiqu'il fût continuellement avec elles. Son amour-propre sembloit ne le rendre capable que d'attachement pour lui-même."

† _Siécle de Louis, XIV._ T. I. p. 226. "Ce prince qui s'habillait presque toujours en femme, qui en avoit les inclinations, qui couchoit coeffé en cornette, qui mettoit du rouge et des mouches, agit en capitaine et en soldat."

sied right." The princess de Montpensier accompanies this anecdote with the reflection that this conduct appeared extremely unfeeling.* Not less unfeeling was the behaviour of the courtiers, in the last hours of the princess, who during her whole life had been the object of general love and admiration. While the duchess of Orleans was suffering the most excruciating pains, when the physicians could procure her no relief, they went to and fro, talking and laughing in her apartment, as if nothing had been the matter with the princess.†

Monseigneur, or the great Dauphin was rather shy than proud, but still more reserved than his royal father. In the lifetime of his first consort, he was engaged in some short-lived amours;‡ and after her death, he married Mademoiselle Choin, a good-natured, but not a lovely woman. Upon the whole, he did not manifest a strong propensity for the other sex, and his gallantry was inferior to his love. His

* *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 212. "Cela me parut fort dur."

† *Ibid.* p. 227. "On causoit, on alloit, et on revenoit dans cette chambre; on y rioit, comme si Madame avoit été dans un autre état."

‡ Concerning the gallantries of the Dauphin, see *Richelieu*, I. p. 138.

example occasioned the young gentlemen of the court to neglect the fair sex still more than they had ever done before.*

Whatever of gallantry there was at the court of Louis XIV. had expired much earlier than the last days of the king, when the courtiers trembled in the presence of their monarch, like monks before a rigid abbot.† At the time when the king's passion for Madame de Maintenon was most violent, and attracted the greatest notice in all France, it was remarked that all chivalry was extinguished at the court, and that it was more the fault of the ladies than of the men.‡ In fact, the

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, V. 224. "Ce qui etoit cause qu'on les abandonnoit ainsi c'est que Monsieur le Dauphin n'avoit nulle inclination pour le beau sexe; il n'aimoit que la chasse . . . tous les jeunes gens se regloient sur lui? La Beaumelle passes too severe a judgment on the author of this work in the *Mémoires de Maintenon*, I. p. 82. The sagacious editor of the *Journal de Henri*, III. and IV. makes no scruple, notwithstanding this censure, to refer, though with caution, to the work.

† *St. Simon*, II. p. 290. "Vers la fin de ses jours la galanterie des premieres temps avoit disparu; et ses courtisans etoient gênés comme des moines en presence de l'abbé."

‡ In the year 1673, the count Bussi-Rabutin observes, in a letter to Madame de Seuderi: "Je crois, comme vous, que toute chevalerie est éteinte à la cour; mais c'est plus la faute des dames que des chevaliers." Vol IV. p. 51. See also the complaints of the marquise de Lambert, on the extinction of gallantry, in her *Œuvres*, p. 33, 193, and *Mém. de la Farc*, p. 58.

facility with which they gratified the passions of the other sex, caused their charms to be held so cheap by the young courtiers, that the latter would scarcely deign to take any notice of them.* A secret society was formed, whose members pledged themselves to enjoy among each other those pleasures which they had before sought among women.† Several of the princes of the blood, and many of the first nobles of the court took part in this unnatural confederacy.‡ The king broke up this society, and drove most of its members from his court; but with all his power he was unable to eradicate this unnatural propensity and intemperance, which he hated more than any other vice. Neither did those who renounced unnatural gratifications, return to the sex, but attached themselves to the bottle, and by

* *Hist. amour. des Gaules,* V. p. 1. "La facilité de toutes les dames avoit rendu leurs charmes si meprisables à la jeunesse, qu'on ne savoit presque à la cour, que c'etoit que de les regarder."

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Ibid. Lettres de Maintenon,* I. p. 189. *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon,* III. p. 13. *Confessions of the duchess of Orleans,* p. 139. Among the princes who belonged to this society, or were at least attached to the abominable practice of the order, were the duke of Orleans, the prince of Conti, the duke de Vendôme, &c.

its immoderate indulgence, were led into the most unexampled excesses.*

In the most brilliant times of Louis XIV. none possessed the favour of the king and the love of the ladies in a higher degree than the count, and afterwards duke de Lauzun. This favourite treated the sex in a manner that would scarcely have been forgiven in one of the minions of Henry III. The princess of Monaco, being unable to resist the solicitations of the king, resolved to sacrifice her former lover, M. de Lauzun, for his master. Her inconstancy exasperated the haughty favourite to such a degree that he said the grossest things to the king, and broke a large mirror in the apartment of the princess, who happened to be absent.† Louis XIV. confined the incensed lover in the Bastile, from which he was, however, soon liberated, because the king lost all relish for the princess of Monaco, after the first enjoyment, and could not dispense with the society of Lauzun. He one day saw the princess of Monaco seated on the grass, and her fair hand resting on the ground. He went up to her and

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, V. p. 22. 23.

† *Ibid.* p. 227, 31.

trod, as if by accident, upon her hand, and then turned round upon his heel. The princess gave a violent shriek, and loaded him with the bitterest reproaches, to which Lauzun listened with the utmost composure, and which he answered with cold excuses. Of all the ladies whose hearts he gained, none loved him with such ardour and constancy, and none sacrificed so much for his sake as the proud and illustrious princess de Montpensier, who frequently solicited the king in the humblest manner, to fulfil the promise he had originally given, and to consent to her marriage with M. de Lauzun.* After she had released her lover from his tedious confinement by the cession of a principality to the duke du Maine; Lauzun repaid this and other magnanimous sacrifices with the blackest ingratitude, and even with the most revolting rudeness. One day, on his return from hunting, he said to the princess, with whom, according to report, he had been privately married, "Henriette de Bourbon, pull off my boots!" When the princess complained of this insolence, he made a motion with his foot, as though he would have

* *Mém. de Montpensier*, VI. p. 70, 74. *Mém de Mainton*, II. p. 150, 151.

added the grossest of insults.* He began, at length, to beat her, not merely out of brutal passion, but from principle, and at last used the princess so ill that she was under the necessity of parting from him entirely.†

The decline of the respectful gallantry of ancient times, even during the early part of the reign of Louis XIV. is more clearly demonstrated by the alteration of the forms of courtesy, than by any of the circumstances which I have yet noticed. A friend shewed the learned Menage a well written letter from a lady, which concluded with this compliment: *votre très-humble et très-obeissante servante.* Menage gave it as his opinion, that a lady ought not to write thus. Next day Menage received a billet from Mademoiselle Scuderi, in which she likewise subscribed herself *votre très-humble servante.* Some days afterwards, a letter with the same words arrived from another lady. On this, Menage's friend went to Mademoiselle Scuderi, to acquaint her with what had passed. "It is true," replied she, "that the ladies were once prouder than they

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, as above. "Il fit du pied un mouvement qui étoit le dernier des outrages."

† *St Simon*, X. p. 164.

are at present."* In former times, continues the same author, when a person wrote to a female, he concluded his letter with the words: "I kiss your hands," or, "I kiss your feet, and am," &c.† These forms, as well as the actual kissing of hands, fell into disuse, during the lifetime of Menage.

* *Menagiana*, p. 125.
† *Ibid* p. 263.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the State of Morals, especially of the Female Sex, during the reign of Louis XIV.

THE reign of Louis XIV. was the era of the commencement of good taste in France. The language reached nearly the highest degree of perfection that it was possible for it to attain. True politeness and the tone of good company, which had before been sought in vain, were then discovered. The higher classes, and especially the females, never possessed so many useful and agreeable talents and attainments as in the age of Louis XIV. which they principally contributed to create. Superstition and Machiavelism, nevertheless, pervaded the court and the cabinet, and morals continually became more and more depraved. The useful acquirements diffused among the higher ranks, were not wholly without effect. They formed, however, a dyke far too

weak to confine the torrent of the example of an adored monarch, and the seductive allurements of the voluptuousness which he poured, as it were, over his whole court. Chastity and conjugal fidelity became subjects of ridicule. A love of pomp, pleasure and dissipation, advanced with still more rapid strides than the lewdness of both sexes, and inflamed all with a desire of making their fortune, which spared nothing, stuck at nothing, and was forgiven every excess, because each was sensible that under similar circumstances, he would in like manner have sacrificed religion and virtue, honour and friendship. When people had satiated themselves with the enjoyment of every innocent and natural gratification, they plunged into the filthy pool of the grossest and most vulgar debaucheries, merely for the sake of novelty, and to rouze their dormant senses. The vices of the court inundated the capital and the whole kingdom with much more fatal force than its pleasures. They infected even foreign courts and nations. The piety of the king, at the advanced period of his life, effected no amendment in the manners of the court and of the people. Invincible vices still lurked in concealment, and

were aggravated by universal hypocrisy.* The moralists of the age imagined it impossible to make much farther advances in depravity. The succeeding reigns, however, demonstrated that the profligacy of the powerful, and the oppression of the weak were destined to be augmented by many degrees, before they produced the most tremendous of revolutions. France and all Europe would at this moment have presented a very different spectacle, had Nature and education formed out of Louis XIV. a truly enlightened, virtuous and pacific sovereign.

The prodigious corruption of morals at the court of Louis XIV. first manifested itself by the excesses in which most of the princesses of the royal family indulged. The two consorts of the king; the first dauphiness of the house of Bavaria; and the second wife of Monsieur, a princess of the Palatinate, were the only females that maintained an unimpeached reputation. The mistresses of Louis XIV. were likewise advantageously distinguished from those of Francis I. Henry II. and Henry IV. by their constancy to their royal

* *Richelieu*, I. p. 7.

lover.* The amiable Henrietta, of England, was equally vexed and surprised when she found that the modest Valliere had supplanted her in the king's affections. As the heart of the king was irrecoverably lost, she bestowed her love on the handsome count de Guiche, after whose removal she listened to the addresses of the marquis de Vardes.† The charming duchess of Burgundy was enamoured at one and the same time, of M. de Nangis and M. de Maulevrier. When she pretended to lament the departure of her husband for the army, the court laughed, and it was considered doubtful which of her two lovers extorted the tears from her beauteous eyes.‡ The passion of this dauphiness for the young duke de Fronsac excited so much scandal, that the lover was confined in the Bastile on account of it.§ The princess of Conti was informed by the king himself that Clermont, her admirer, had sacrificed her

* The duke de Richelieu insists that Madame de Montespan was frequently guilty of infidelity to the king. I. p. 101. De la Fare asserts, that the king always kept his mistresses under lock and key. p. 60.

† *Hist. de Mad. Henriette d'Angleterre*, p. 43, &c. 119, &c.

‡ *St. Simon*, III. p. 100, &c. "La cour rioit. Si les larmes étoit pour lui ou pour Nangis cela étoit douteux."

§ *Mém. de Richelieu*, I. p. 33, 149, 150.

to La Choin, one of her maids of honour, and that he had ridiculed her fondness for him. Louis punished his daughter by obliging her to read to him, not only her own letters to Clermont, but likewise the correspondence between him and La Choin: a task during which the princess repeatedly fainted away.* The greatest scandal, however, was given by the duchess de Bourbon, and the duchess de Berry. Neither the king nor Madame de Maintenon could keep these two dissolute young princesses within any bounds. The duchess de Bourbon plunged into the society and the excesses of the most profligate women, and answered the gentlest admonitions with the keenest contempt.† The duchess de Berry frequently tormented her husband to such a degree, that he would run in a fit of fury and despair to the king, and in the most urgent manner intreat that he would release him from his wife.‡ She was not merely fond of vice, but also of the parade of vice. She insisted that La Haye, master of the horse

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, p. 62, &c.

† *St. Simon*, p. III. 157. *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, IV. p. 160, 161.

‡ *Ibid* p. 209.

to her husband, should elope with her in public, and from the midst of the court.

The licentiousness of the ladies of the court was still greater and more general than that of the princesses. Even at court, the extent of the evil was but imperfectly known, before the confinement first of Fouquet, the comptroller general, and afterwards of the duke de Lauzun. In the desk of the former were found a much greater number of love-letters than of important papers relative to state-affairs, and from ladies who had never incurred the slightest shadow of suspicion. Hence originated the report, that all the females in the kingdom, who enjoyed the reputation of virtue, had been won by the gold of the prodigal minister.* This report of the general frailty of the women of quality was confirmed by the secrets of love which were discovered in the casket of the duke de Lauzun. Here were found, in the first place, the portraits of females without number, one without a head, another with the eyes scooped out, and a third with a hand demolished. Beside these portraits lay the hair of all his mistresses, carefully folded up, and a multi-

* *Mém. de Mad. Henriette d'Angleterre*, p. 71, 72.

tude of letters, which convinced the king that the coyest women of his court were not the least frail.*

The young duke de Candale was as great, or even a greater favourite with the ladies than the duke de Lauzun. "In the last years of his life," says his friend St. Evremond,† "all our ladies fixed their eyes upon him. The most reserved sighed in secret; and the most gallant disputed the possession of him as of supreme felicity. After he had parted them by the interest of his love, he united them by his death in their tears. All felt that they had been attached to him, and universal tenderness occasioned universal lamentation. Those whom he had once loved called to mind their former sensations, and imagined that they had but just sustained the loss which they had long before deplored. Others who were indifferent to him flattered themselves that they would not always have remained so, and lamented the death of an amiable man

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 21. "On trouva dans ses cassettes des portraits des femmes sans nombre, une sans tête, une autre les yeux crevés, une autre la main écrasée, les cheveux de toutes ses maitresses en ordre, et étiquetés et des billets qui apprirent à Louis que les femmes les plus prudes de sa cour n'etoient pas les moins fragiles."

† *Œuvres*, III. p. 34, 35.

whose affections they had hoped to gain. Others mourned for him out of vanity, and strangers were seen mingling their tears with those ladies whom the duke had known, in order to make a merit of their gallantry. The countess d'Olonne, the real object of his affection, obtained celebrity by the violence of her grief. Fortunate had she not suffered herself to be so soon consoled for his loss! One single passion does honour to the ladies, and I know not whether it be not more favourable to their reputation than never to have loved at all."*

In fact, those females who had but one lover besides their husbands were not deemed coquettes. Only such passed for coquettes who had several lovers at once, or who frequently changed them, and publicly acknowledged their inconstancy, or at least took no pains to conceal it.† As honourable as it was to cherish one single passion, so ridiculous it was thought to make the husband the object of that

* "Une seule passion fait honneur aux dames et je ne sais si ce n'est pas une chose plus avantageuse à leur réputation que de n'avoir rien aimé."

† *La Bruyere*, p. 122. "Une femme que n'a qu'un galant, croit n'être point coquette. Celle qui a plusieurs galants, croit n'être que coquette."

passion. But if a woman was even forgiven for loving her husband, it was considered an unpardonable crime for a wife to express such sentiments in company, or for a husband to manifest an affection for his wife. During the reign of Louis XIV. married people first began to be ashamed of each other. Husband and wife would have been the objects of universal ridicule, had they ventured to appear together in public.* Fashion, all-powerful fashion, which separated persons united by the most sacred of ties, taught that any other men had a better right to wives than their husbands, and that any other woman had a better right to husbands than their wives. "The women," says Thomas,† "lived continually in the company of strange men, and the men in the society of other women. With this love of society, opportunities for seduction became more frequent, and both sexes mu-

* *La Bruyere*, p. 434. "Mais quelle mauvaise honte fait rougir un homme de sa propre femme, et l'empêche de paroitre dans le public avec celle qu'il s'est choisie pour sa compagne inseparable, qui doit faire sa joye, ses delices, et toute sa société; avec celle qu'il aime et qu'il estime, qui est son ornement, dont l'esprit, le mérite, la vertu, l'alliance lui font honneur? que ne commence-t-il par rougir de sa femme."

† p. 144, 145.

tually encouraged the depravity of each other. The men lost their respect for the women, and the women the delicate sense of modesty and shame. The more time they passed from home and in company, the less they could devote to the duties of domestic life. The women who were the greatest favourites with the men, were so much the worse wives and mothers." Faithless wives were so common, that their husbands were neither pitied nor ridiculed. It belonged to the *bon ton* for wives to make lovers happy, and for husbands to laugh at the ornaments which decorated their brows.*

Coquettes of rank might have as many lovers at once, or change them as often as they pleased, without losing any portion of the respect paid them by the great world, while they possessed beauty, wit, grace, and above all, the talent of affording entertainment. The disgusting gallantries of a Ninon de l'Enclos,† a prin-

* *Confessions of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 84. "The ladies of the first quality were almost all faithless to their husbands. This belonged to the *bon ton*. The husbands laughed at their own horns, and this also belonged to the *bon ton*.

† Of this equally celebrated and notorious female I have already had occasion to treat in a preceding volume.

cess of Monaco,* a *marechale* de la Ferté,† a countess d'Olonne,‡ a Madame de Valentinois,§ de Nangis,‖ de Polignac,¶ and others, did not prevent all the youth, and beauty, and wit, and quality of the court and capital from seeking their society, and their admirers and friends of both sexes from being in the highest request. "Personal graces and social accomplishments passed for virtues and atoned for every vice. No one had the heart to despise as mean and depraved, that which possessed such powerful attractions. To please and to displease, became the most common words of the language of the court."** With respect to the talent of pleasing and gallantry, the character which the duke de St. Simon has given of Madame de Nangis, may be applied to most of the females mentioned above. "No one," says he,†† "could possess more wit, more refined pleasantry,

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, III. p. 231, 233.

† *Ibid* p. 300, &c.

‡ *Ibid.* IV. p. 251, &c.

§ *De la Fayette Mém. de la Cour de France*, p. 201. "Madame de Valentinois, plus coquette elle seule que toutes les femmes du royaume ensemble."

‖ *St. Simon*, II. p. 153, 154.

¶ *Confessions of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 90.

** *Thomas*, p. 147.

†† II. p. 153, 154.

greater talents for insinuating herself into every person's good graces, and adapting her discourse to the character and circumstances of each, than Madame de Nangis, daughter of the marechale de Nochefort. This lady had at once the falsest, the blackest and the most intriguing of characters; she related whole histories, not a word of which was true, with an air of such simplicity and candour, that nobody could entertain a doubt on the subject; and was at the same time the most fascinating of Syrens, from whom even people perfectly acquainted with her had no method of escaping but by flight. Her society was exquisitely agreeable. No one could with a face so innocent, and wit so inexhaustible, throw out such keen and sarcastic reflections on persons and things which actually did not deserve them. For the rest, she was more than gallant, when she found any person disposed to gratify her. At length, she became so degraded as to ruin herself for the sake of the lowest menials. Notwithstanding these numerous and destructive vices, she was the favourite of the city and of the court. Her house was always full of persons of both sexes, who belonged to the best and most brilliant societies; but her company was

most courted by the three daughters of the king, who even went so far as to quarrel concerning her; though she was more partial to the duchess de Chartres than to the other two. She governed that princess with absolute sway. The domestic discord and dissensions which were thereby fomented, the aversion, and even abhorrence with which she inspired the princess for her husband and father-in-law, caused her expulsion from the court. The tears of the princess, however, effected her recal. She was admitted to some distinguished parties of the king, and diverted him, by her wit, to such a degree, that he could talk to Madame de Maintenon of nothing but Madame de Nangis. Madame de Maintenon was afraid of the enchantress, and began with the greatest circumspection to take such measures as might ultimately lead to her final removal."

Madame de Nangis was banished the court, under the pretext that the scandal she gave was no longer to be endured; but in fact, or at least, in the opinion of the courtiers, in consequence of the secret jealousy of Madame de Maintenon. Fatal as were to others the sentences of Louis XIV. they were utterly destitute of effect

when pronounced against lovely women, whose charms were their greatest crime, or who did no more than what the king and his mistresses themselves did, or had done. It occasioned little or no prejudice to the countess d'Olonne, when the king called her the disgrace of her sex.* Louis himself lived in twofold adultery, and legitimated a son whom the marechale de la Ferté had, during the life-time of her husband, by the young duke de Longueville, and of whom she was delivered in her husband's house, that he might afterwards be the better able to legitimate his own bastards.†

Of all the notorious coquettes of the age of Louis XIV. Ninon de l'Enclos was almost the only one, who indeed, as she herself observes, turned her person to the best account, but by a certain moderation in her gratifications, retained that respect which she had acquired by her intellectual qualifications and her beauty. The shamelessness and profligacy of most of the others, such as the marechale de la Ferté, the countesses d'Olonne, and du

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, IV. p. 25.

† *Ibid.* III. p. 300.

Roure,* the princess of Monaco,† Madame de Nangis, and de Polignac increased with their years. They fell, at length, into general contempt, from contempt into the lowest indigence or loathsome diseases, which prematurely terminated their lives. After they had debilitated or infected all the young men of the court,‡ they abandoned their declining charms to such as chose to pay, or purposely lost money to them at the Faro-table.§ When they could no longer find any one willing to pay for the enjoyment, they hunted out actors, dancers,‖ foreigners,¶ and even menial servants, whom they were in general obliged to remunerate for their services. None suffered more severely for her

* At an entertainment given at Meudon, the prince de Turenne all at once burst into a loud laugh. The Dauphin enquiring the reason, the prince replied: "C'est que je trouve fort plaisant, que de neuf que nous sommes ici, du Roure soit le seul qui n'ait pas couché avec Madame." *Mém. de Maintenon*, IV. p. 156.

† *Ibid.*

‡ "Madame de Polignac," says the duchess of Orleans in her *Confessions*, "has sweetly peppered all the young men of quality."

§ *Hist. Amour. des Gaules.*

‖ *La Bruyere*, I. p. 125.

¶ Three ladies of quality, among whom was Madame de Polignac, once robbed the son of the Turkish ambassador, kept him locked up for two days, and tried what a young Turk is capable of doing. *Confessions of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 90.

depravity than the princess of Monaco, who was disfigured in the most horrible manner by the loathsome disease of which she died.*

At all courts, and in all capitals, there always were and always will be such women as those whom I have just described, though perhaps not in such numbers as at the court of Louis XIV. The love of pleasure, pomp, and profusion, which the king excited and rendered either habitual or indispensably necessary; the consequent, speedy, and almost general impoverishment of the nobility; the eagerness after favour, places, and pensions, resulting from urgent necessities and pressing embarrassments; and the desire of making and advancing fortunes, were still more powerful causes of the universal corruption of morals. Men of rank, and even princes cringed before the king, before his

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, III. p. 233. *Lettres de Bussy*, I. p. 269. "Madame de Monaco est partie de ce monde avec une contrition fort equivoque et fort confondue avec la douleur d'une cruelle maladie. Elle a été defigurée avant que de mourir. Son desseehement a été jusqu'à outrager la nature par le derangement de tous les traits de son visage." This kind of death was probably more frequent among the ladies of the court, than the shameless procedure of the wife of the minister Lionne, who suffered the duke de Sault to lie in the same bed between herself and her daughter, the marquise de Cocuvres. *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, IV. p. 204.

ministers and his mistresses, before their minions and the favourites of the latter; and this example set by husbands and fathers, was followed by their wives and daughters. "The women began to live in a low familiarity with men of business. Those who could not aspire to the comptroller, or the farmers general, insinuated themselves into the good graces of their agents and clerks. They delivered in new projects and proposed fresh taxes. They sold their patronage; they sold their virtue; they sold the marrow of the people. The labouring part of the nation was oppressed by the lovely part."* Those who possessed power, made use of it for the purposes of plunder, or to sell to others the liberty of robbing and cheating with impunity. Such as durst not, or would not have recourse to these expedients, sought to raise themselves in the world by advantageous marriages. Men of the highest rank courted the daughters of opulent financiers, or of favourites, by whose recommendation they hoped to obtain large dowries, lucrative places or pensions.†

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 114.

† For a niece of Madame de Maintenon, even a prince of the house of Lorraine, and the son of the duke de Noailles durst not offer themselves as suitors. The latter

The blood of the French nobility became depraved; the distinctions of rank were almost abolished, and wealth was the only standard by which the worth and consequence of persons and families was estimated.* Among the whole court, small indeed was the number of beautiful women, who would not have offered, or have been ready on the slightest intimation to sacrifice their own honour, and that of their families to the happiness of being the mistress of the king. There was, in fact, not a family at the court of Louis XIV. but what built the hope of honours and fortune on the beauty of their daughters, and encouraged the latter to make it their study to gain the affections of the king.† To be the mistress of the monarch was deemed felicity so supreme,

obtained her hand, and Mademoiselle d'Aubigny was the commencement of the prodigious fortune which the house of Noailles in the sequel acquired. *Mém. de Maintenon*, IV. p. 250.

* *St. Simon*, p. I. 182. "This luxury has become a sore, an internal caneer, which preys upon every individual. From the court it has spread over the provinees, where people are estimated according to the table they keep. This obliges some to rob, in order to defray the expence; it confounds ranks, and is productive of general disorder and universal ruin."

† This was the case with Mademoiselle de la Mothe,--- *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, II. p. 24, and afterwards with Mademoiselle de Fontages, as well as many others.

that Mademoiselle de Fontanges, on receiving the first notice of the king's passion for her, fell into a kind of swoon, and for some time was so overpowered with transport, that she was unable to utter a word.* It was well worth the while of proud and ambitious women to swoon at the intimation of the partiality of the king. Mademoiselle de Fontanges was created a duchess; besides the presents made by her royal lover, she received one hundred thousand crowns a month for the maintenance of her establishment, and was, nevertheless, astonished at the scantiness of the provision made for the mistress of so great a monarch.

The same wants and desires which originated in the avidity for favour, places, and pensions, were increased, and still more generally diffused by the passion for play. The king, as I have already related, in another place, prohibited the most ruinous games of hazard in the capital, upon pain of death; but at the same time tolerated them at court. He played himself; the queen, the princes, and the princesses were passionately attached to play. The courtiers followed their illus-

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules,* III. p. 149.

trious examples, and played so high that a person sometimes lost one hundred thousand pistoles in an evening.* Gentlemen and ladies of the highest rank kept gaming-houses or banks, "which were so many lures for the avarice of men; so many abysses that engulphed the fortunes of families; so many rocks on which the happiness, honour and virtue of natives and foreigners were wrecked."† From these places emissaries were sent out to discover such persons as had been left a rich inheritance, or had received a considerable present, or had gained an important law-suit, or had won a large sum at play, or who were willing to stake upon a card the monies with which they were intrusted. Numberless were the instances of persons who totally ruined themselves by gaming, and had no other excuse to make, than that they could not live without play."‡

* Madame de Sevigné thus writes to the count de Bussy: "Pour revenir a la bassette, c'est une chose qu'on ne se peut representer. On y perd fort bien cent mille pistoles en un soir". *Lettres de Bussy*, I. p. 299. Concerning the dreadful consequences of high play, see the *Confessions of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 83, 85.

† *La Bruyere*, I. p. 204.

‡ *Ibid.* "Mille gens se ruinent au jeu, et vous disent froidement, qu'ils ne sauroient se passer de jouer."

Unbridled licentiousness and avarice produced the horrible poisonings which in 1676 and 1680 struck terror into the court and capital, and filled all Europe with astonishment and horror. The marquise de Brinvilliers poisoned father, husband, child, and brothers, besides many other persons.* Never, says Madame de Sevigné,† were so many crimes punished with such lenity. This female monster was merely beheaded; her body was burned, and her ashes scattered to the winds. She was spared the torture, both ordinary and extraordinary. So great was the apprehension, lest she might make discoveries, that she was flattered with hopes of pardon, and to this it was owing that she went with such firmness to the place of execution.

A still stronger sensation was excited in 1686, by the trial of La Vigoureux and La Voisin,‡ the investigation of whose crime, and the discovery of whose accomplices was committed to the *chambre ardente*, as it was denominated, in the ar-

* *Lettres de Serigné*, IV. p. 44, &c. *Mém. de la Fare*, p. 210, &c

† *Lettres*, IV. p. 198, 199.

‡ *Ibid.* V. p. 346, 372. *Mémoires de Mad de Maintenon*, II. p. 129, &c.

senal. When the two last mentioned women had no longer any personal charms to dispose of, they dealt in those of common prostitutes, and relinquished this dangerous business for one still more dangerous, the trade in poison. They sold the most subtle and virulent poisons, of tried efficacy, to women who were tired of their husbands, and to children who wished to get rid of their parents. The common people consulted them as sorceresses, and the courtiers in the character of poisoners. They at first practised their art without much noise. Thirst of gain, or the hope of being skreened by the number of their accomplices rendered them bolder and bolder, till they at length sold their drugs publicly, and without any precaution. Madame de Montespan was afraid of poison, and the minister Louvois of sorcery. These two importuned the king till he established the *chambre ardente* in the arsenal.

The most distinguished persons of both sexes belonging to the court, were summoned on charges of poisoning, or sorcery, and the investigation of the latter rendered the whole tribunal suspected or detested. One of the members had the courage to address the president de la

Reinie in the following terms: "As far as I see, sir, we are chiefly engaged with sorceries and infernal agency, on which subjects the parliament of Paris will not receive any charges. Our commission relates to poisoning. How happens it then, that we pay attention to other things?" The president answered, that he had secret instructions; on which his spirited colleague replied; "Lay down some rule for us, and we will obey as well as you. But as I am ignorant what commission has been given you, I think it consistent with reason and justice to say what I do."* Among the accused, was the marshal de Luxembourg, who, like many others, was confined for several months in the Bastile, and the countess de Soissons, the first mistress of Louis XIV. The latter fled to the Netherlands, where, according to report, she was denied admittance into several towns, the magistrates of which informed her, that they wanted no poisoners within their walls.† The investigation made such a noise in foreign countries, that apprehensions were entertained, lest a Frenchman and a poisoner should

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 358, 9.

† *Ibid.* V. p. 372.

be deemed synonimous appellations.* Previous to this time, Henrietta of England,† and, at a subsequent period, the minister Louvois,‡ were most probably poisoned. But with respect to the duke and duchess of Burgundy, though the suspicion of poison was so general, yet scarcely a doubt can exist, that they died a natural death.§ Had these two royal personages been dispatched by poison, the young dauphin and the dukes of Orleans and Maine would most assuredly not have been spared.

Of all the vices of the court none unfortunately infected so large a portion of the nation, as the love of pleasure, pomp, and profusion. A total revolution took place in the general system of life, in dress, habitations, furniture, conveniences, and, above all in the table, not only among the higher, but also among the middling classes,

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 372. "C'est ainsi que cela se tourne; et desormais un François dans les pays étrangers et un empoisonneur, ce sera la même chose."

† *St. Simon*, III. p. 41. Compare *Mém. de Montpensier*, V. p. 231.

‡ *Ibid.* I. p. 75.

§ The duke de Richelieu suspected that they, as well as the great dauphin, and the other persons who died in the space of eleven months, had been all taken off by poison. I. p. 141, 177. Compare *Mém. de Maintenon*, V. p. 122.

whose example was copied as closely as possible by the lowest orders of the people. "The Roman emperors," says La Bruyere, "had not so many conveniencies during their triumphs, nor were they so completely sheltered from rain and wind, from dust and sun, as the citizens of Paris when they drive through the streets of the capital. What a contrast with the mules on which our forefathers were content to ride! They were not acquainted with the art of depriving themselves of necessaries that they might be able to procure superfluities, or of sacrificing real comforts to exterior appearances. They did not cause their apartments to be badly warmed that they might burn wax-candles. Wax was reserved for the altar and for the Louvre. They did not starve themselves that they might ride abroad in a carriage. They thought that people had legs to walk, and they made use of them for that pupose. In fair weather they remained clean, and in foul they gave themselves no more concern about soiling their boots and shoes, than the sportsman, when he is obliged to wade through a bog, or the soldier, when he is forced to bemire himself in the trench. They never conceived the idea of harnessing two men to a chair; magis-

trates went with the same dignity to their courts as Augustus formerly proceeded on foot to the capital. At that time tin glistened on the table and on the sideboard, as did iron and copper in the kitchen and on the hearth. Women were waited upon by persons of their own sex. The mistress of the house even superintended the kitchen. Governors and governesses were unknown to our ancestors. They knew to whose care to commit the offspring of kings and princes. Parents divided with their children the duties of domestics, and themselves undertook the task of education. They kept their own accounts, and adapted their expences to their income. Their town-houses and country-houses, their servants, furniture, and tables, were all suitable to the rank and the fortune of each. There were exterior signs by which the wife of an advocate might be distinguished from the wife of a magistrate, and the citizen or the menial from the gentleman. Our forefathers were less solicitous to encrease or to squander their property, than to keep what they had. They accordingly delivered it undiminished to their children, and a tranquil life was terminated by an easy death. They did not complain of

the hardness of the times and the scarcity of money. They had less money than we, but yet they had enough. With their frugality and content, they were richer than we with our great estates and pensions. Finally, they were deeply impressed with this maxim, that the pomp and splendour which are becoming and necessary for the great, are folly and prodigality in private individuals."*

Profusion and guilty passions produced among the middling classes in the capital, the same crimes as at court. "Nothing is heard of," writes the duchess of Orleans to the privy-councillor de Harling,† "but tragic adventures, poisonings, murders, robberies. It is quite the fashion now at Paris, for people to put an end to their own lives, most by drowning, many by hanging, and many by stabbing themselves, and all for the sake of paltry money, as if people expected to be richer after their death. The people here are horribly barbarous. Three days ago, a woman was found upon

* *Suite des Caracteres de M. de la Bruyere,* II. p. 49. The marshal d'Humieres was the first that took a service of silver plate with him into the field, and kept a splendid table in the camp. His example was soon followed by others. *Mém. de Gourville,* I. p. 155.

† *Confessions,* p. 87.

a spit, ready for roasting. Parents murder their children, and children murder their parents; and these atrocities are perpetrated here every day." Their unnatural way of life was almost the only thing that distinguished the great from the middling classes. Ladies of quality did not rise till noon, and were scarcely dressed before five o'clock. Plays, balls, and the gaming-table successively engaged them, and they seldom retired to bed at an earlier hour than four in the morning.

Duclos has not endeavoured, like Voltaire, to throw a veil over the corruption of morals under Louis XIV. He was, however, of opinion, that vice retained more modesty and decency than it manifested at a subsequent period.* The duchess of Orleans says,† that "in the time of the queen and the first dauphiness, nothing but modesty and dignity prevailed at court, and that those who were secretly debauched were obliged in public to demean themselves with decency; but that from the time when old Maintenon

* I. p. 202. "Il y a aujourdhui moins de decence dans nos mœurs."

† *Anecdotes*, &c. *of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 124.

began to acquire such ascendancy, and the royal bastards were introduced into the family, the morals of both sexes became more and more depraved."

Louis XIV. had not such friends, neither did he live on such a familiar footing with his friends and mistresses as Henry IV. Still less did he indulge in such low and disgusting debaucheries as the duke of Orleans. Nevertheless, it cannot be asserted, that the manners of the court evinced any attention to decency. The laws of public decorum were transgressed in a variety of ways by the king himself, by the princes and princesses, and by the courtiers of both sexes.

The French had long been accustomed to see their kings keep professed concubines besides their legitimate wives. It was likewise no uncommon thing for these monarchs to change their mistresses, and take new ones when they were tired of the old favourites. But it was a proceeding perfectly new, and unparalleled even in France, for a king to have several professed mistresses at once; to take them with him in his excursions and campaigns, in the same carriage with the reigning queen; to present to his people and his armies a scandalous example of manifold adultery,

and revolting polygamy. From the early times of Montespan, who was torn by force from her husband, the gentle Valliere figured for years by the side of her rival, as did Montespan herself, from the year 1680, by the side of de Fontanges and Maintenon. "At length," observes the duke de St. Simon,* "the king robbed the husband of his wife with an *eclat*, which filled every nation with abhorrence, and he first exhibited to the world, the spectacle of two professed mistresses. He took them both with him to the frontiers, to the camps, and to the armies, and that too, in the carriage of the queen. The people assembled from all parts to obtain a sight of the three queens, as they were called." In the year 1680, the spectacle of four queens, to make use of the expression current among the multitude of those times, was exhibited at court. The consort of Louis XIV. was still living, though indeed totally forgotten. Madame de Montespan was not yet discarded, and enjoyed all the prerogatives attached to her condition as mistress. Mademoiselle de Fontanges was created a duchess, and Madame de Maintenon enjoyed such high favour,

* II. p. 6, 7.

that Madame de Montespan was much more jealous of the latter than of de Fontanges.*

In the early period of his passion, the king one day explained to the fair Fontanges, the figures wrought in the magnificent tapestry, after the designs of Le Brun, and desired the duke de St. Aignan, to make an impromptu on the subject. The duke, who acted in the capacity of pimp to the king, and was one of those who were most intimately acquainted with his intrigues, complied with the injunction of his master, so much to the satisfaction of the latter, that he requested him to compose a longer piece on the subject.† The duke hereupon wrote his *Triomphe de l'amour sur le coeur d'Iris*,‡ in which he celebrated the victory of the king over the heart of the fair Fontanges, and all the previous conquests which Louis had made

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 445. "Madame de Montespan is highly incensed. She wept much yesterday. You may judge of the anguish endured by her pride, which is still more sensibly hurt by the high favour of Madame de Maintenon. His majesty very often spends a couple of hours, after dinner, in the chamber of the latter, conversing with a friendship, a freedom, and an ease, *which renders that place the most desirable in the world.*"

† *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, III. p. 162, &c.

‡ This piece is to be found in the third volume of the *Hist. amour. de Gaules*, from p 166, to 188.

of other ladies.‡ The king caused this piece to be read aloud before the whole court, after a ball and collation which he had given in honour of the new mistress. His practice of parading about with his mistresses was scarcely so great a violation of public decorum, as the verses in praise of his adulterous exploits, which he caused to be written and recited.

As little as the king strove to conceal his adulteries and polygamy, so little did the princes of his house make a secret of the unnatural propensities to which they were addicted, or the princesses endeavour to throw a veil over their irregularities, and the trull-like habits they had contracted. The dauphin having one day taken leave of the king at Marly, went up to the apartments of the princesses, where, to his utter astonishment, he found the duchess de Chartres, and the duchess de Bourbon,

* *Hist. amour. des Gaules,* III. p. 174, 175.

Il emporta d'assaut le coeur d'Amarillis, (Mancini)
Il prit celui d'Amynthe (la Valiere) et celui de Phillis, (Montespan)
Il accepta les clefs de celui de Climene (du Lude)
Et celui de Cloris (Soubise) le reconnut sans peine

Ces coeurs n'étoient pas assez forts
Pour soutenir un siége, et pour se bien defendre;
Aussi l'amour pour les prendre,
Ne fit pas de grands efforts.

smoking, and that with pipes procured from the Swiss guards.* It was rather deemed an honour than a disgrace to the courtiers, both old and young, to be daily, or, at least, frequently intoxicated. Among those who were advanced in years, he was considered a moderate man who got drunk only with wine. Many had lost all relish for that beverage, and therefore had recourse to brandy, and the strongest distilled liquors.† Of the young courtiers, none was admitted into the circles of the leaders of fashion, or the *Petits Maitres*, as they were denominated, but such as took part in their wild orgies.‡ These young men, when overheated with wine, committed the most atrocious excesses, not only in brothels, and on the persons of common women, but on the persons and houses of the inhabitants of Paris, nay, even on the

* *Hist. amour. de Gaules*, III. p. 111.

† *La Bruyere*, I. p. 249. "Celui-la chez eux est sobre et moderé qui ne s'enyvre que de vin. L'usage trop frequent qu'ils en ont fait, le leur a rendu insipide; ils cherchent a reveiller leur gout deja eteint par les eaux de vie, et par toutes les liqueurs les plus violentes."

‡ *Hist. amour. des Gaules*, V. p. 23, 185. "Je veux parler du vin, à quoi tous les jeunes gens, qui venoient à la cour etoient obligés de s'adonner, s'ils vouloient faire cotterie avec ceux qui s'appellent Petits-Maîtres." *Mem. du Marqu. de la Fare*, p. 85.

most sacred things, for which any other would have been punished with the faggot and the wheel.* Courtiers, and even such of them as were invested with high dignities and honours, still continued to frequent brothels and taverns. In 1689, the king sent the blue ribbon, by special couriers, to M. de Bouffleurs and the marquis d'Huxelles. The latter simply thanked the minister Louvois, and added, that if the blue ribbon were to prevent him from going to taverns and other places of that description, he would, in this case, return the mark of royal favour.†

Intemperance was a vice still more difficult to be eradicated than the gallantry accompanied with public scandal. When the king began to renounce the love of mistresses, and to worship the God of the Jesuits, after their fashion, instead of beautiful women, the courtiers of both sexes concealed their gallantries, and covered their secret and illicit connexions with the cloak of devotion, or rather of hypocrisy. As early as 1678, it was the

* A transaction of this kind is related in the *Hist. amour. des Gaules*, V. p. 23. in which the son of the minister Colbert was one of the principal actors.

† *Mém. de Mad. de la Fayette*, p. 106.

general practice for even the most dissolute of both sexes to go daily to church, and to perform their devotions for the edification of others, and in particular of their domestics.* In 1683, not only the king, but likewise the whole court was converted. The ladies who had previously manifested the strongest aversion to the public worship, never quitted the churches. Those who were most celebrated for their piety, were not more zealous than the most notorious coquettes. Every Sunday the church was as much crowded as it had usually been only at Easter.† Gallantry, and gallant connexions ceased to be in fashion.‡ Without devotion, or, at least,

* *Lettres de Mad. de Maintenon*, I. p. 112. "Qu'elle fasse tous les jours la prière en public. Comptez qu'on doit cet exemple à ses domestiques. Ici ou on fait le mal avec tant d'effronterie, et le bien avec tant de negligence, on ne manque point à ce devoir."

Ibid. I. p. 171. "Je crois, que la reine a demandé de Dieu la conversion de toute la cour. Celle du roi est admirable. Les dames qui en paroissoient les plus eloignées ne quittent plus les eglises. Madame de Montchevreuil, Mesdames de Chevreuse et de Beauvillier, la princesse d'Harcourt, et en un mot toutes nos dévotes n'y sont pas plus souvent, que Mesdames de Montespan, de Thianges, la comtesse de Grammont, la duchesse du Lude, et Madame de Soubise. Les simples dimanches sont comme autrefois les pâques." Even the marechale de la Ferté and the countess d'Olonne began to make their servants fast. *Duclos*, I. p. 94.

‡ *Suite des Caracteres de M. de la Bruyere*, II. p. 91.

the appearance of sanctity, no salvation was to be found at court any more than in the other world. May it not be justly affirmed, that this general affectation of piety was one of the greatest indecencies at the court of Louis XIV.?*

Il y a dix ou douze ans que les commerces galans etoient communement pratiquez : on y renonce à present, du moins on cache son jeu . . . ainsi la mode a été, la mode n'est plus, la mode reviendra."

* *Mém. de la Fayette*, p. 127.---" car à l'heure qu'il est, hors de la pieté point de salut à la cour, aussi bien que dans l'autre monde.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the Influence of the Fair Sex on the Affairs of the Court and State, during the Reign of Louis XIV.

At the court of no other king of France, did the women reign with such absolute sway, as at the court of Louis XIV. They governed not so much by their personal charms, as by their superior intellectual qualifications: not so much through their virtues, as through the imbecility and depravity of the men.

"The mistresses," says the duke de St. Simon, "had such an influence upon the whole system of government of the king, and on public as well as private affairs, that I cannot do better than begin the second volume of my Memoirs with this article. The scandal which they occasioned spread to the remotest corners of Europe, covered France with shame, shook the foundations of the state, and, doubtless, drew down the curse, under the

weight of which the king had well nigh sunk, and which swept away all his legitimate offspring, excepting one single scion. From these evils have originated many others, which we shall long continue to feel."

The mistresses of Louis XIV. occasioned manifold and incalculable evils, by the effects which their examples produced at court and among the people; by the ruinous expence and prodigious debts incurred by the maintenance and establishments of themselves and their children; by the love of pomp and profusion into which they led the king and his courtiers; by the favours lavished on the worthless, and the mortifications heaped upon the deserving, in compliance with their caprices; finally, by the violations of the laws of the realm, and the dangerous confusion resulting from the elevation of the royal bastards. I touch but slightly on all these mischiefs, that I may proceed to treat of the unexampled share which, not only the mistresses of the king, but the sex in general took, during the reign of Louis XIV. in the affairs of the court and kingdom.

Among the mistresses of the king, there was only one who possessed a powerful and permanent influence at court and

in the cabinet.* The unassuming, modest, and tender Valliere, was so happy in the love of the king, that she gave herself no concern about any other subject; and for this reason, all the historians of those times exclaim: "Would to God that Louis XIV. had kept la Valliere longer, or that her successors had resembled her!" Mademoiselle de Fontanges had too little spirit, and died too soon to perform any thing of consequence, except making a provision for her family.† Still more transient was the liking of the king for the princess of Monaco, and the fair Madame du Lude.‡ If the passion which he conceived for Madame de Soubise, and perhaps for another married lady of the court, had more solidity,§ these mistresses, who were less known

* Concerning the gallantries of the king, see in particular *Richelieu*, I. p. 99. About the same time that Louis's fondness for La Valliere commenced, he conceived tender sentiments for a Mademoiselle la Mothe, *fille d'honneur* to the queen. To prevent his entertaining himself in private with her, Madame de Navailles, the first lady of the bedchamber, caused several doors to be walled up. *Hist. de Mad. Henriette d'Angleterre*, p. 112. The princess de Montpensier says, that this circumstance afforded a subject for considerable mirth. *Mém.* IV. p. 11. V. p. 67.

† *St. Simon*, II. p. 10.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 15.

§ *Ibid.* p. 11, &c.

than the preceding, gained little more by the sacrifice of their honour than places and wealth for their husbands, children, and other relations. Madame de Montespan alone had sufficient talents and good fortune to be able, for the space of ten years, to prepossess the king against or in favour of many persons, and to influence his determination on many important occasions. When the king was with her, and the ministers came to speak to him on business, she began to play with the kids, or the guinea-pigs, or other animals, which she kept in her apartments, but at the same time she paid the greatest attention to every word that was uttered. The king sometimes joked with his ministers on the playfulness of the wit of the Mortemars; and Madame de Montespan, supported or prepared by her accomplished sisters, often dropped a few words which completely turned the scale.* All the ministers and statesmen paid their court to this haughty female, on account of her caprices, with as much assiduity as to the king himself. Colbert received both verbal and written orders from Louis XIV.

* This is mentioned by Madame de Maintenon in several of her letters.

to comply with all the wishes of Madame de Montespan;* and Louvois, without any injunction on the part of the king, was solicitous to gratify all the desires of his mistress, because she admired the minister as the most perfect model of a great man, and in return, performed for him the most important services with the king.† A beautiful, accomplished, and ambitious woman, who was so dear to the king and his two principal ministers, certainly possessed the power of doing much good during the period of her favour, and at the same time could not fail to do much mischief. The former excited great attention at Paris and Versailles; and the latter in the provinces, when, in 1675, Madame de Montespan suddenly quitted the court in a fit of devotion, and the king, overtaken by a similar fit, endured for a time, without impatience, the absence of his beloved mistress. The court

* See a letter of the king in the *Mém. de St. Simon*, II. p. 201. "Continuez à faire ce que Madame de Montespan voudra."

† *Mém. de Maintenon*, III. p. 45. "Louvois étoit le meilleur ami de Mad. de Montespan, qui disoit: il remplit toutes les idées que j'ai d'un grand homme." At the same place it is correctly observed, that the intimacy between Louvois and Madame de Montespan, was the first cause of the mutual antipathy of that minister and Mad. de Maintenon.

and the capital lamented, and the provinces rejoiced at the indifference of the king towards the fair fugitive. "Our kings," said the people of Paris and Versailles,* "must have either a mistress or a prime minister. Both the one and the other have it in their power to perform a great deal of mischief; but the good they do by keeping the servants of the crown within the limits of their duty is incalculable. A beloved female softens the manners of the monarch, disposes him to listen to the prayers of the injured and oppressed, appeases the ebullitions of his anger, directs his attention to his faults, inspires him with a love of glory and of the sciences, and communicates to him that moderation which attempers commands, and lightens obedience. The abuse of power by the king's servants is prevented; the ministers are not unanimous, and perform their duty so much the better. Who could support the *ennui*, the misfortune of royalty, unless the sovereign enjoyed that liberty which is possessed by the meanest of his subjects? A mistress certainly occasions an additional expence; but what does that signify, if luxury re-

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 75.

stores to the people what imposts take from them? How many officers are recommended by Madame de Montespan; how many artists are pensioned; how many petitions presented; how many unfortunate wretches relieved and supported by her! Yes, but with respect to morals! Were then the public morals more pure under Louis XIII. who loved nothing? And was his cardinal, who loved every thing, less respected on that account by the pope and the Sorbonne?—But the salvation of the king!—What! will he not soon enough become old? His devotion is more to be dreaded than all his amours. But the degradation of the men of the highest rank, in being obliged to pay court to a mistress!—The homage which we paid to Madame de Montespan, was a part of the respect we owed to our king. Instead of one female, we are now obliged to adore twenty; and what women! Madame de Colbert is as inaccessible as her husband; and La Dufrésnoi* as haughty as her lover, Louvois; and in

* *Mém. de la Fare*, p. 167. "It is wonderful with what assiduity persons of the highest rank of both sexes paid their court to this woman; who, on her part, treated them with all the insolence proceeding from beauty and prosperity, joined to low birth and a mean understanding."

what obscure corners of the *fauxbourgs* are we to hunt for the creatures of Siegnelay?"

The courtiers were most assiduous in their exertions, till they had dispelled the first gloomy clouds of devotion which had overcast the mind of Louis XIV. and his mistress, and had brought the latter back to the court. Madame de Montespan in a short time again obtained possession of her royal lover, and recovered her former influence, which she, however, lost a second time, at least five years before her final dismission from the court. The best and the worst thing that Madame de Montespan did or occasioned during the period of her favour, was incontestably the removal of the king from his victorious army in 1672, which she effected by her amorous complaints and flatteries.* The king hastened back on the wings of love to St. Germain, and with him fled that fortune which had conducted him and his army almost to the gates of Amsterdam. Holland was saved, and all the advantages purchased at the price of so much blood and treasure were again lost, because

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 41, and *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, II. p. 77.

Louis XIV. could no longer resist the ardent desire to enjoy the charms of his beautiful mistress.

But neither Madame de Montespan nor the mistress of any other French monarch, ever governed the court, the kingdom, and a great portion of the rest of Europe, so long, and it might almost be said, with such absolute sway, as Madame de Maintenon; a mysterious woman, whose history has hitherto been written only by partial panegyrists or avowed enemies, and whose merits and demerits it is therefore almost impossible to appreciate.*

Françoise d'Aubigné† was born in 1635, in the prison of Niort, where her father was confined for high misdemeanors, and where her mother voluntarily shared with

* Compare only the *Mémoires du duc de St. Simon*, with *Beaumelle's Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon*. The former was an enemy, the latter the panegyrist of that remarkable woman. From the *Mémoires du duc de Richelieu*, it appears, that upon the whole St. Simon deserves more credit than Beaumelle. Both not only ascribe the same actions to very different motives, but they differ widely in their accounts of the same facts. Amidst all these contradictions, we cannot always discover with Duclos, that Madame de Maintenon neither deserved all the praises she received from her panegyrists, nor all the censures bestowed on her by her enemies.

† This was the family name of Madame de Maintenon.

him the hardships of confinement.* After the baron d'Aubigné had regained his liberty, he went with his wife and children to Martinique, became the proprietor of considerable plantations; but losing all his possessions at play, he was glad to procure an inferior military employment, the income of which afforded but a scanty subsistence. The prodigal did not long survive his last great misfortune, and left his family in the lowest state of indigence. The helpless widow returned with her children to France, and gave up her daughter, on whose education she had bestowed particular pains, as a pledge for the payment of some debts she had yet to discharge. As she was unable to pay them, the child was sent to a female relation of her mother. She passed from the hands of one benevolent person into those of another. Of the different people with whom it was her fortune to live, the most unkind was Madame de Neuillant. It was this lady who carried her young relative, at that time a girl of fourteen, to Paris, and introduced her at the house of the equally ugly and witty poet, Scarron, where the most accom-

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, I. p. 71.

plished persons of the court and capital assembled. Françoise d'Aubigné was soon known by the name of the fair West-Indian, and enchanted even the suffering Scarron to such a degree, that he offered her his hand, which she accepted in 1651. The good company that was accustomed to meet at Scarron's house flocked to it more than ever; and in this company it was, that Madame de Scarron formed herself in particular for the polite and fashionable world. It is very probable that Scarron, who was wholly debilitated, and a perfect martyr to disease, was never able to consummate his marriage;* but it is not likely that his young and beautiful wife, whom he so soon left a widow,† always continued inexorable to the solicitations of her numerous admirers, as her biographer would persuade us to believe.‡ After her husband's death, she was a constant visitor at the hotels of the duke de Richelieu and the marshal d'Albert, where commenced her acquaintance with Madame de Montespan. Even this favourite of the king could not, without an impor-

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, I. p. 100.

† Scarron died in 1660. *Ibid.* p. 129.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 113, &c. 202, &c. Compare *St. Simon*, II. p. 17.

tunity, which had nearly excited displeasure, procure a very moderate pension for the widow Scarron, who had already resolved to leave France, and to go to Portugal with the princess de Nemours. The more intimately Madame de Montespan became acquainted with Madame Scarron, the more attachment and respect she felt for her; and for this reason she obtained her the appointment of governess to the first child she bore the king in the greatest privacy. The fecundity of Madame de Montespan soon increased the number of Madame Scarron's wards to three, to whom she manifested a truly maternal affection during the frequent illnesses and ailments of their infancy. Madame de Maintenon at first resided at Paris, or in one of the suburbs of the city, that the secret of the charge committed to her might be kept so much the more private. For the same reason, she never saw Madame de Montespan but in the apartment of their common friend, Madame d'Hudicourt. It frequently happened, that Madame de Montespan, fascinated by the charms of her conversation, remained longer with Madame Scarron than she had intended, and made the king wait for her. The impatient monarch once asked what Ma-

dame de Montespan and Madame Scarron could have to converse about so long? Madame d'Hudicourt replied: "They are talking of things so learned and so sublime, that I have left them, because I cannot understand a word they say." From this moment Louis XIV. conceived an aversion for the governess of his children, because he thought she affected the character of a learned female. The antipathy of the king continued several years after he had removed the children entrusted to the care of Madame Scarron to the court, that they might be educated under his own inspection, or, at least, that he might see them without restraint. Madame de Montespan sent every night for Madame Scarron, that she might enjoy the pleasure of her conversation while undressing, and even in bed, and compensate herself for the *ennui* of the day, by the interesting society of a person, whom she treated, in the hours of good humour, as her most intimate friend. These long and frequent conversations vexed the king to such a degree, that he at length forbade them, lest his mistress should become such another *precieuse* as the governess of her children. Notwithstanding this prohibition, Madame de

Montespan continued her private interviews with Madame Scarron; and though she sometimes treated her confidant with harshness, yet she never ceased importuning the king to reward the services which Madame Scarron had rendered her children, and in particular, to enable her to purchase the lordship of Maintenon. The king at first pretended not to hear this request; but when Madame de Montespan repeated her solicitation, he angrily replied, "that he had already done too much for the creature; that he could neither comprehend how Madame de Montespan could entertain so great a partiality for such a person, nor how she could still retain her in her service, after he had so often directed her to be dismissed." He farther declared, "that he could not endure Madame Scarron, but yet he would comply with the request of his mistress, if she would promise that he should never see or hear any thing more of Madame Scarron."* The animosity of the

* This is related by the duke de St. Simon, on the authority of the duke de Lorges, who was present during the conversation between the king and Madame de Montespan respecting Madame Scarron. *Mém du duc de St. Simon*, II. p. 24, 25. What the author of the *Mémoires de Maintenon* says in Vol. II. p. 45, &c. concerning the

king against Madame Scarron, who, after the purchase of the estate of Maintenon in 1675, began to be styled Madame or marquise de Maintenon, was gradually weakened by various causes, but principally by the tenderness which she shewed to her foster-children, and the brilliant hopes which were given by the young duke du Maine. This bastard was from the first the favourite of Madame de Maintenon, and he very soon became the favourite of the king. He was more fondly attached to Madame de Maintenon than to his mother, and always named her as his only instructress, when the king rejoiced at the early proofs of the boy's cultivated understanding. The affection of the beloved child was insensibly communicated to the father. At the same time, the frequent ill-humours of Madame de Montespan obliged the king likewise to chuse the friend of his mistress for his own confidante. Louis poured forth his complaints into the bosom of Madame de Maintenon, who had similar complaints to make to the monarch, of the haughty

king's sentiments towards Madame Scarron, at the time of the purchase of the estate of Maintenon, must consequently be erroneous.

disposition and unequal temper of her mistress. Madame de Maintenon was alternately the mediatrix of the two lovers, and more frequently the accuser of Madame de Montespan; still oftener, however, she strove to awaken the conscience of the fair sinner and her illustrious admirer.* Amidst these candid effusions of the heart, Madame de Maintenon incontestably displayed not only the dignity of her virtue, the ardour of her piety, and the warmth of her zeal for the salvation of the two sinners, but likewise all the charms of her person and the agreeable qualities of her mind, which had long caused her to be acknowledged one of the most amiable of her sex at court and in the capital. In the last years of the eighth decennium of the seventeenth century, Madame de Maintenon rose in the affection and esteem of the king, in the same proportion as Madame de Montespan began to sink. Louis could not resolve upon a total separation from his for-

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, II p. 65, &c. The author of these Memoirs denies that Madame de Maintenon preached the truth to the king with a *bouche ridicule en pâtrêche*, but in several places he puts into her mouth such sermons to the king, as it is scarcely possible for her to have held.

mer mistress, because he still had wants which she was ready to relieve, but which Madame de Maintenon would not have satisfied. In 1680, the whole court could not forbear observing, that Madame de Maintenon was in higher favour with the king, not only than Madame de Montespan, but also than even the duchess de Fontanges.* In the last-mentioned year the king renounced all familiarity with Madame de Montespan, appointed Madame de Maintenon second *dame d'atour* to the dauphiness of Bavaria, and returned to his long-neglected consort, who was convinced that God had raised up Madame de Maintenon to restore to her the heart of the king, which had long been alienated from her by Madame de Montespan.† The queen did not long enjoy the renewed love of her husband, from whom death separated her in 1683. It is no injustice to Madame de Maintenon to affirm, that from this period she cherished the love and the devotion of the king in an equal degree, that she might at length

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 445. VI. p. 219. "La faveur de Madame de Maintenon est toujours au suprême. Le roi n'est que des momens chez Madame de Montespan, et chez Madame de Fontanges qui est fort languissante."

† *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 162.

persuade him to a lawful, though private, union with her. There is no reason to doubt, that towards the conclusion of 1685, Louis XIV. married Madame de Maintenon, who was then fifty years of age.* This marriage remained a secret, or was at least problematical, even at court and in the capital. In 1689, many began indeed to believe that Madame de Maintenon was the wife of Louis XIV. but she was, nevertheless, commonly called the king's old mistress.† In 1689, the report was renewed that the king and Madame de Maintenon had previously been bound by no other ties than those of honour and conscience, but that in that year they had been united in marriage by the archbishop of Paris.‡ It was thought, that after the solemnization of the nuptials, she assumed a higher tone, and interfered in all affairs much more than she had done before.§ Soon after her marriage, she remonstrated in such an impressive manner with the king, on the scandal

* *Mém. de Maintenon,* III. p. 48.

† *Lettres de la Comtesse de la Riviére,* I. p. 340.

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 393.

§ *Ibid.* III. p. 97. "Depuis son mariage elle le prend sur un ton plus haut qu'auparavant. Elle exerce son autorité d'une maniere plus absolue, qu'aucune reine de France n'a jamais fait. Elle se mêle de tout, ordonne de tout, réussit en tout; et son ton despotique révolte tous les princes, en particulier Monseigneur."

given by the residence of his mistress at court, that he directed either her or her pupil, the duke du Maine, to announce to Madame de Montespan his command, that he should retire from it.*

It was not enough for Madame de Maintenon that she was united in the bonds of matrimony with the king. She was solicitous to be publicly recognized as

* *Lettres de la Rivière*, I. p. 192. *Mém. de Maintenon*, III. p. 64. The duke de St. Simon relates, II. p. 72, that the duke du Maine carried his own mother the intelligence of her exile, and this account I think the most probable. If, however, Madame de Maintenon undertook the task of acquainting her former benefactress with the displeasure of the king, she did what, in some respects is more deserving of censure than the action ascribed by St. Simon to the duke du Maine. A writer insults the understanding of his readers, when he excuses such indelicacy and cruelty as Madame de Maintenon is said to have been guilty of, in the way in which the author of the *Mémoires de Maintenon* endeavours to palliate them. "Elle se flattoit," says he, "que l'idee de ce que cet arret avoit d'agréable pour elle, adoucieroit dans sa bouche ce qu'il avoit de dur pour Madame de Montespan." The softer were the accents, and the smoother the words, so much the greater was the cruelty of Madame de Maintenon. Accordingly as her biographer informs us, Madame de Montespan was enraged to the highest degree, at the intelligence announced to her by such a mouth. "Ah!" cried she, "had I believed him (the king) fourteen years ago, you would not assassinate me now." She called for her children that she might tear them in pieces, &c. The duke de Richelieu gives a totally different account of the disgrace of Madame de Montespan from that of St. Simon, or of Beaumelle, I. p. 105.

queen.* Louvois heard that Louis had promised that he would soon declare her queen of France. The fulfilment of this promise he prevented by one of the boldest and most commendable actions of his life. One day after dinner he went with a roll of papers straight to the apartment of the king. His majesty seeing him at an unusual hour, enquired what brought him just then. "Business of great urgency and importance," replied the minister. At these words the attendants withdrew, but left the glass-doors a-jar out of curiosity, so that they could hear as well as see all that passed. As soon as Louvois was alone with the king, he began to explain the nature of his errand. Louis XIV. employed every possible subterfuge, and at length hastened towards the adjoining

* The author of the *Mémoires de Maintenon* adduces every specious argument he could find, to prove that Madame de Maintenon was much too modest to aspire to the crown. III. p. 54. In another place he admits, that some wishes to ascend the throne might have escaped her, but that they were the more excusable, as no vestiges of them were left behind. IV. p. 83. The truth, however, is, that abundance of traces are left, as the *Mémoires du duc de St. Simon*, and the *Lettres de la comtesse de la Riviere* demonstrate. On this subject, St. Simon is much more worthy of credit than the biographer of Madame de Maintenon, because he received his information from Madame de Rochfort, the most intimate friend of Louvois.

apartment, in which were his attendants, in order to get rid of so troublesome an adviser. Louvois, upon this, fell at the feet of the king, and presenting him a dagger, implored him to plunge it into the heart of his faithful and importunate servant, if he was determined to make public his marriage, and to cover himself, in the eyes of all Europe, with a disgrace which he (Louvois) could neither see nor endure. The minister held his master so firmly, his intreaties were so moving, and his arguments so weighty and so irresistible, that the king again gave him a solemn promise, that he never would declare his marriage with Madame de Maintenon. With this determination Madame de Maintenon was made acquainted in a few days by the king himself; and not long afterwards she heard to whom she owed this resolution of her husband. From that moment she deemed Louvois her most inveterate enemy. She undermined him slowly but so surely in the favour of the king, that Louvois would inevitably have been sent to the Bastille, had he not been carried off, either by an apoplexy, or by poison, the very day before this sentence was to have been exe-

cuted.* The annihilation of the hope of being publicly declared queen of France, and receiving the homage due to that character, was, doubtless a grand source of uneasiness to Madame de Maintenon during the remainder of her life; especially when she heard that there were people who still regarded her as the mistress of the king, or at least pretended to hold that opinion.†

As the king would neither make known his marriage himself, nor suffer it to be declared by others, Madame de Maintenon was obliged to make a mystery of her real condition. Nevertheless, expressions escaped both her and the king, or rather, they purposely dropped words to different individuals, which left no doubt respecting their actual situation‡ But without these casual hints, the manner in which the king treated her, and in which she conducted herself towards the princes,

* *Mém. du duc de St. Simon,* II. p. 58, &c.

† *Lettres de Mad. de la Riviere,* I. p. 340. III. p. 97. "Mon mari m'a dit que Madame de Maintenon est dans une tristesse mortelle. Son ennui la dévore et est peint sur son visage. Ses ennemis disent qu'elle crève d'ambition et de dépit de n'avoir pas le titre de reine. Elle-même donne lieu à ces soupçons."

‡ These expressions and hints are collected in the *Mém. de Maintenon,* III. p. 54, &c.

the princesses,and the ladies and gentlemen of the court, sufficiently bespoke the character of Madame de Maintenon. The king shewed her greater attention, not only in the presence of the court and of the ministers, but also of the army and of the people, and caused the princes and princesses to pay her higher respect than the deceased queen, and still less any of his mistresses had ever enjoyed.* Madame de Maintenon went to none of the princesses of the blood, not even to Madame.† Whenever she wanted to speak with the younger daughters of the king, she sent for them to attend her. The princesses appeared with fear and trembling, because Madame de Maintenon scarcely ever sent for them but to give them a reprimand. In her apartment she was almost always seated in an armchair, in the most convenient place, before the king and queen of England. She never rose to any person except, perhaps,

* *St. Simon*, II. p. 120. "Il auroit été cent fois plus librement avec la reine, et avec moins de galanterie. C'étoit un respect le plus marqué quoiqu'au milieu de la cour, et en presence de tout ce qui vouloit s'y trouver des habitans de Marly." The reader will recollect the account of the review of Compiégne given in the fifth Chapter of this Volume.

† *St. Simon*, II. p. 84, 85.

to Monseigneur and Monsieur, because it was very seldom that they paid her a visit. To persons, with whom she was not familiar, and who obtained audiences, she raised herself a little, but without standing up.* The Dauphiness she never addressed by any other appellation than *Mignonne*, even till her death; and that in the presence of the king, and the ladies of the court. Speaking of the duchess of Burgundy, or the duchess of Berry, she would simply call those princesses, though they were even present, *la duchesse de Bourgogne*, or *la duchesse de Berry*, or *la Dauphine*, and very seldom *Madame la Dauphine*; and in like manner, *le duc de Bourgogne*; *le duc de Berry*, &c. It was as difficult to obtain audiences of her as of the king himself; and these she generally gave at St. Cyr. Whoever wanted to speak to her, was otherwise obliged to wait till she left, or returned to her apartments at Versailles: and then it was impossible to say more than a few words. The antichamber was the extreme limit, beyond which she suffered no person to enter. Very few highly-favoured persons had permission to visit her; and

* *St. Simon*, p. 118, 119.

still smaller was the number of the happy mortals to whom she paid visits, or with whom she condescended to dine. On all solemn occasions she gave precedence to the ladies of the highest rank; and never took it of those of inferior quality, unless when they obliged her. In all these situations she was polite, modest and unassuming. Her household, which was not numerous, her equipages, her dress and ornaments were as modest as her demeanor. Nevertheless, she had something extremely imposing, and took a severe revenge when any one failed to pay her that respect which she regarded as her due.

The panegyrists and the enemies of Madame de Maintenon are not so unanimous on any other subject as this, that from the moment she became the decided favourite of the king, and especially after her private marriage, she possessed a greater influence over the affairs of the court and state, than any queen of France, or the mistress of any French monarch had ever enjoyed. On one point, however, they differ; the one maintaining that Madame de Maintenon purposely insinuated, or forced herself into a participation in the affairs of government; and

the other asserting, on the contrary, that she was pressed into it, against her inclination, by the king, or by her confessors and advisers.* The king entertained such a high opinion of her understanding and her talents for business, that he would call her by way of pre-eminence, even in the presence of his ministers, *Reason* or *Your Solidity*, and frequently asked her: *Qu'en pense votre solidité?* or: *Votre solidité, Madame, approuve-t-elle cela?*†

Louis XIV. seldom held councils, because he hated disputation, and was fond of dispatch in business. Each of the ministers went separately to him, and all had their appointed days and hours of attendance, excepting Torcy alone, who represented that his avocations could not be tied down to any stated times, and therefore maintained a certain degree of independence of Madame de Maintenon.‡ At first, it happened that one day when the king was indisposed, Louvois was ad-

* The former opinion is maintained by the duke de St. Simon, II. p. 94, &c. and the latter by the author of the *Memoires de Maintenon*, III. p. 168, &c. The duke de Richelieu supports the former, to whom he bears upon the whole a very favourable testimony, though St. Simon's opinion of him is not the most advantageous. *Mém. de Richelieu*, I. p. 34.

† *Mém. de Maintenon*, III. p. 170.

‡ *St. Simon*, II. p. 101.

mitted into his bed-chamber to confer with him. Madame de Maintenon, who was present, rose to withdraw. The king, however, detained her, saying: "Don't go Madame, M. de Louvois knows that we can rely on your discretion; and perhaps you may not be unserviceable to us." Louvois and the other ministers murmured at this innovation. Their discontent was of so little avail, that the king, on the other hand, ordered the ministers to repair in future, for the transaction of business, to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, in which were placed two arm-chairs, one for the king, and the other for Madame, and two stools, on one of which the minister seated himself, laying his bag with papers upon the other, while he was engaged with the king. The minister spoke aloud. The lady heard all that passed, seldom made any observation, and still more rarely was what she said of any importance. On the other hand the king very often asked her opinion. At such times she would answer with the greatest precaution, and scarcely ever seemed to interest herself particularly for any subject or any person. The business, however, was preconcerted between her and the minister, who had

not the courage to take any steps which might frustrate her wishes, either in her presence, or when he was alone with the king. If there was any place, or mark of honour to be disposed of, the affair was settled between them, some days before it was to be decided. Hence arose sometimes a delay, of which neither the king, nor any other person knew the reason. Madame de Maintenon sent word to the minister that she wished first to speak to him on the subject. On such occasions he did not venture to bring forward the matter, till the regular course of things had afforded him an opportunity of learning the sentiments of Madame de Maintenon. This done, the minister prepared and presented a list to the king, waited for him to give his opinion, and took the opportunity of making objections. He very seldom proposed the person he had in view, but always pointed out others, whose merits he balanced against each other in such a manner, that the king was at a loss in whose favour to decide. Louis then asked the opinion of the minister, who again went over the list of candidates, and at length pitched upon the person for whom the place had been previously destined. The king was almost always undecided, and asked the opinion

of Madame de Maintenon. The latter smiled, affected to have no opinion to give in the business, and always fixed on the person whom the minister had supported, though the latter might perhaps not even have mentioned his name. In this manner she disposed of three-fourths of all the honours and places, and even of three-quarters of the remaining fourth. When she interested herself for nobody, she suffered the minister to act as he pleased. The king had not the slightest suspicion of this secret contrivance. He imagined that he disposed of every thing, though, in fact, he very rarely followed his own unbiassed inclination, and that was, either when he had fixed upon any individual, or when a person was recommended to him by some one to whom he was particularly attached.

When Madame de Maintenon wished to ensure the success or the failure of any measure, though she did not so frequently interfere in affairs of that nature, as in the distribution of honours, offices and emoluments, there was the same previous understanding between her and the minister, and she resorted to the same artifice. By this mode of proceeding, she effected almost every thing she pleas-

ed; though she was sometimes thwarted in her wishes. When the king was obstinate, she employed a different device. Means were found to postpone the decision, to perplex and protract the affair, to bring another imperceptibly on the carpet, in order to divert attention from the former, or to recommend a more mature consideration of the business. Thus, time was given for the first emotions to subside. In due time the affair was again taken up, and very often the point was gained. The same method was adopted to magnify or diminish faults, to enforce or to invalidate the claims of merit, and to pave the way to the ruin, or the elevation of individuals. On this account the conferences of the king and his ministers, in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, were of the utmost importance to such as had any thing to ask of the court. For the same reason Madame de Maintenon was so solicitous to keep the ministers dependent on herself, and the ministers, on the other hand, raised themselves through her to such a pitch of importance, because she assisted them and their friends with all her influence, that she might attach them so much the more firmly to herself. When the minis-

ters were coming to transact business with the king, or after their departure, she chose her time to sound the sentiments of the monarch respecting them, to excuse or to praise them, to pity them on account of the multiplicity of their business, or to display their qualifications in the most favourable light.

If she wished to procure any favour for the ministers, these were the moments in which she prepared the king, and instigated him to encourage or to reward them, alleging that his servants were too modest to ask themselves for any remuneration. There existed therefore, a circle of reciprocal wants and services, which caused each to pay the utmost attention to the other. If Madame de Maintenon could effect little or nothing without the ministers, still less could the latter carry any point without her consent. No sooner did she find that the ministers were determined to make themselves independent of her, than their ruin was resolved upon, and never failed to follow; because Madame de Maintenon, notwithstanding her piety, was a stranger to forgiveness. She employed time, pretexts, and artifices, and sometimes an abundant portion of all these. She occasioned the fall

of Louvois, and, after his death, not a minister was dismissed, or appointed, who was not indebted to her for his disgrace or elevation. She had no great or permanent influence over foreign affairs, because these were frequently decided by a council of state, and Torcy had access at any time to the king, on urgent occasions. The princess Ursini became, however, through Madame de Maintenon, almost the arbitrary mistress of Spain; out of gratitude, she governed in the spirit of her patroness, and communicated to her every secret.* The concerns of the church and of religion were of much greater importance to Madame de Maintenon than the foreign affairs. She interfered in both, as far as she could, and in the appointment to ecclesiastical dignities, her vote was frequently decisive.† In this department, however, she was, for a long time, less powerful than she wished. The order of the Jesuits, and La Chaise and Tellier, the two confessors of the king, were the only per-

* Two great councils of state were assembled in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon. One of these was that in which it was deliberated, whether the will of the king of Spain, and the inheritance of the Spanish monarchy should be accepted or not. *St. Simon*, III. p. 154.

† *St. Simon*, IV. p. 91.

sons over whom she was unable to prevail, to whom she was even obliged to yield after severe struggles, and to sacrifice her favourites, the cardinal de Noailles and archbishop Fenelon. The statesman, from whose works I have extracted most of the preceding particulars and opinions, reflecting on the influence possessed for such a length of time by Madame de Maintenon, exclaims: "The royal authority, the public and universal homage, the ministers and generals, the whole royal family, in a word every thing was at her feet: through her alone, all were happy, and without her all were miserable. Men and things, honours, justice, and favours, nay, even religion itself, were all in her hands and the king and the state were her victims. What an incomprehensible fairy! How she ruled more than thirty years without interruption, without obstruction, or the smallest cloud! Such a spectacle Europe had never yet beheld!"

Scarcely ever was the government of a woman more firmly established, and, at the same time, more corrupt, than that of Madame de Maintenon. The ministers who were raised by her, were all more or less unfit for the important situations to which they were appointed; and most of

the generals resembled the ministers. * By these ministers and generals, the kingdom was exhausted and depopulated; the finances were thrown into disorder; the enemies of the state were multiplied and exasperated; needless and protracted wars were enkindled, and prosecuted with invariable ill success; armies and fleets were sacrificed, and the whole monarchy was apparently reduced to the brink of inevitable destruction. If Madame de Maintenon was not the original, the only, and the principal cause of the persecution of the Protestants, and their forcible conversion; if she was not the sole occasion of the no less violent persecutions of the Jansenists and Quietists, † she at least neglected to employ every means in her power to prevent the infliction of those incur-

* *St. Simon*, I. p. 89, 98. *Beaumelle*, IV. p. 191. V. p. 32, &c.

† Such were the animadversions, not only of her opponents, but even of many of her friends. See *Richelieu Mémoires*, I. p. 110. "It is well known that the principal revolutions of the government were owing to the part which she took in public affairs: she was the chief instrument of them, if she was not the primary cause. The humiliation of the Jansenists, the persecution of the Protestants, the elevation of the king's natural children above their condition, and the will excluding the duke of Orleans from the regency, were the most important affairs in which she more or less openly intermeddled."

able wounds on the state.* The illegal elevation of the king's natural children, and his will by which they were placed above the legitimate princes of the blood royal were chiefly her work.† By these measures of hers, the life of the young king, and the internal tranquillity of the realm would have been exposed to imminent danger, had not the duke of Orleans possessed so much resolution, and the duke du Maine, a soul so pusillanimous. This disgraceful will was not obtained by stealth, or by means of those artifices which Madame de Maintenon was accustomed to employ to carry all her measures. She compelled the king with such manifest violence, to make a will, which he himself declared to be unjust and invalid, that, unable to suppress his vexation, he several times gave vent to it in the bitterest complaints. To the queen of England and the deputies of the parliament, to whom he delivered this instrument, he said, that he had thereby purchased repose; that the will had been extorted from him; that he had been obliged to act contrary to his inclination, and

* *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, III. p. 17. IV. p. 141. V. p. 107.

† *Ibid.* and *St. Simon*, II. p. 114, 115.

to do, what he thought he ought not to have done.*

Madame de Maintenon possessed all the endowments by which a beautiful woman is enabled to captivate the hearts of the other sex, and to enchant the most polite companies.† Her extraordinary qualifications were developed in a most astonishing manner by the vicissitudes she experienced, and the circles in which she lived. Her acute and cultivated understanding conducted her through a series of the most arduous situations to the throne of the greatest monarch in Europe. Her understanding, however, was far surpassed by her ambition, which instigated her to intermeddle in a great number of matters to which she was incompetent, and consequently her interference was productive of nothing but confusion and disappointment. She was sincerely devout, before she could conceive the most distant suspicion, that her piety and virtue would influence her temporal prosperity. But she

* *St. Simon*, VI. p. 204. *Richelieu*, I. p. 180. In the latter period of his life, he frequently exclaimed, "Ah! quand j'etois roi!"

† See the testimony of Madame de Sevigné in *Beaumelle Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, II. p. 11. and *St. Simon*, II. p. 33.

wished to appear more pious, and imagined herself more devout than she actually was. She often deceived the king and herself so egregiously, that she often fancied herself actuated by zeal for religion, when ambition, revenge, or other latent passions were the motives of her conduct.* Virtue and piety were not so much the causes as the pretexts for withdrawing the king from Madame de Montespan; for diverting his affections to herself; for persuading him to a private marriage; for gradually insinuating, or forcing herself into a participation in all the affairs of state. As little as her piety tended to suppress her ambition and love of power, so little did it attemper her suspicious and jealous disposition, the inequality of her character and her caprice, which all her friends were obliged to endure, and which she concealed from the king alone.† She was frugal and moderate in the enjoyment of all the pleasures of sense. It was not difficult for her to deny herself many things, that she might bestow so much the more on the poor. She cheerfully and richly remune-

* This is acknowledged by Beaumelle himself, in the *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*. IV p. 170.

† See *Beaumelle* himself. V. p. 198, 9.

rated all the services and kindnesses performed for her in her humble condition. To her greatest benefactor, to the king alone, was she guilty of the blackest ingratitude. She, who had faithfully attended the wretched Scarron till his latest breath, abandoned the expiring monarch four days before his dissolution, and with her retired Tellier, the confessor, and the duke du Maine, the most beloved of all the children of Louis XIV.* The king most keenly felt the ingratitude of those to whom he had sacrificed his conscience, his family, and even his kingdom. He earnestly desired, that Madame de Maintenon might be sent for. Se came, but only for a moment. Instead of soothing the last hours of her royal consort, she again fled to St. Cyr, and the greatest potentate of his age would have expired, forsaken by all the world, had not some of his faithful domestics possessed more humane hearts than his wife, his son, and his confessor.

Madame de Maintenon was highly honoured, and still more feared; but she was never universally beloved; neither, indeed,

* *St. Simon*, VI. p. 227. *Richelieu*, I. p. 313, 314. It is impossible to read without indignation the excuses which Beaumelle makes for Madame de Maintenon's desertion of the dying king. V. p. 171, &c.

was she deserving of love. She belonged to that description of persons, who can only dispense with the marks of love, if they observe that they are honoured and feared. There were, however, moments in which the sensation of the want of genuine love was extremely painful to her. In one of these moments, she said to the countess de la Riviere; "How happy are you, madam, in being so amiably and so highly beloved by every body: your countenance always wears the expression of cheerfulness."*

Madame de Maintenon was as far from enjoying happiness, as from commanding love. She was continually repeating, and especially to her insatiable brother, that they had both attained much more than the accomplishment of their fondest hopes. She did not, however, attain the object of her most ardent desire, the crown of a queen of France; and the disappointment of this wish wounded her ambition more than it was flattered by all the other honours that were paid her.† The marks of respect with which she was loaded, soon became common, if not disgusting. On

* *Lettres*, I. p. 341.

† See, for instance, *Richelieu Mém.* I. p. 109. 142.

the contrary, the satires and pasquinades circulated by the court of Meudon and her other secret enemies, retained their sting, filled her with vexation, inflamed her revenge, and often excited serious apprehensions, lest the cause of her uneasiness should come to the knowledge of the king, and produce an unfavourable impression. Madame de Maintenon withdrew the king from his mistresses; circumscribed the *fêtes* and diversions of the court within limits more and more contracted; and rendered the king inaccessible to all the world, except her own favourites and confidants, that she might keep him the more securely in her own power. This seclusion of the monarch imposed on her the heaviest of all the burdens of her life, the entertainment of a man, who had the greatest possible want of amusement, and the least possible susceptibility for being amused.* "The soul of Louis was vacant, like the minds of all uneducated princes, and he could not endure to be a moment alone. He no longer sought pleasure, but found it alone in the absence of pain. A continual uneasiness obliged him to be incessantly changing his place and his occupations. As he had a cold imagination, and

* *Beaumelle Mém. de Maintenon*, IV. p. 182.

had not enlarged his knowledge by books, his conversation was dry. He spoke of nothing but what he had seen, and the eyes of a monarch, dazzled by ambition, and nearly inaccessible on account of his elevated station, have not an opportunity of observing much. On his return from the chace, when he was again abandoned to himself, he found nothing but insipidity, and presented to others an empty heart, an uneven temper, a mind overwhelmed either with languor, or with business, ardently desirous, but incapable of amusement and joy, which always shun those most by whom they are the most fervently invoked. Such was the prince who was to be awakened, entertained, amused; a prince who had either all the affairs of Europe, or nothing in his head; whose impressions and whose tastes were continually changing; who had loved the duchess of Orleans and disdained La Valliere, who had loved La Valliere and despised Montespan, who had loved Montespan and hated Maintenon, whom he at length made every thing but the partner of his throne.

" All the proofs of esteem and respect which he exhibited, were far from compensating Madame de Maintenon for the

everlasting slavery and contradictions which she had to endure, for the reproaches, the painful suppression of which was announced by sallies of ill-humour. The king, one day, finding her in low spirits, said to her, 'How is this, madam? you are melancholy.' From that time she took care that he should not again surprize her in her griefs. She always met him with a face, in which were depicted gaiety and content. No sooner had the king quitted her apartment, than she threw herself upon her bed and gave a free vent to her sighs and her tears. 'I have sometimes seen her,' says Mademoiselle d'Aumalle, when oppressed with fatigue, vexation, inquietude and sickness, put on a smiling countenance and assume the most cheerful tone, while she diverted the king with a thousand devices, entertaining him alone four successive hours, without repetition, without slander, and without lassitude. When he left her chamber at ten o'clock at night, and her curtains were drawn, she said to me, with a sigh, 'I have only time to tell you that I am quite exhausted.' After the king had refused her a trifling favour, which she asked for one of her relations, she said to me, 'If I would take the

the trouble to appear a little angry, I might obtain whatever I please; but it is my lot to suffer in silence. The king is naturally kind; he tells me every day that I have only to ask: but our princes know not what it is to confer pleasure of their own accord.' I have often seen her, continues the same lady, resolved to abandon the court, from excess of cares. 'Ah,' she once exclaimed, 'could I but quit this place! But I am no longer my own mistress. Wherefore, O my God, hast thou chained me to it?' A flood of tears accompanied these words, which were interrupted by loud cries. 'How tyrannical are men!' she would sometimes say to me. 'They are incapable of friendship. There is not a better than the king, but we have sufferings to endure from them all. God permits this to wean me from the world. What would become of me, with the homage that is paid me, with the place which I occupy, if I had not some afflictions? A person should be in my situation, to know how hard it is to live.'

"As the king advanced in years, so much the more arduous became the task of Madame de Maintenon. The king saw his ministers, from habit, his gardens, from taste, and Madame de Maintenon,

out of esteem. The long and frequent visits of the king, rendered her thoroughly sensible of the value of that liberty which she had not known while she might have enjoyed it, and which she regretted now that it was no longer in her power. She was fond of society, and lived in continual servitude. She hated pomp, and was constantly surrounded with it. She was naturally so frank, that the duke of Burgundy observed, "She is candour itself, and that is saying every thing;" and yet she was forced to practise incessant dissimulation. 'I cannot endure it any longer,' said she, one day, to the count d'Aubigné; 'I wish I was dead.' 'Have you then,' rejoined her nephew, 'obtained a promise of marriage from God, the father?'

"The character of the king was a source of particular vexation. He expected much, though he demanded but little. He was like the generality of men, who are harsh to their wives, incapable of that delicate tenderness, which the other sex so well knows how to shew, and disposed to treat those as slaves, who, on the first institution of marriage, were only destined for their companions. Husbands, in general, seldom make their wives happy, and

kings scarcely ever. 'No chains are easy,' sighed Madame de Maintenon, 'except those which are worn for the sake of God.' In public, Louis suppressed his ill-humour, but in private he made himself amends for this restraint. Madame de Maintenon, mistress alike of her feelings and of her face, dispelled these clouds, sometimes by the pleasures of music, at others by the charms of the *ton* of the *hôtel de Richelieu*. It is not surprising, however, that this affected gaiety should sometimes have been succeeded by the deepest despondency. 'What torment,' said she once to lady Bolingbroke, 'to amuse a man who is no longer susceptible of amusement!'.

The effusions of the king's spleen against Madame de Maintenon were frequent, and not rarely very severe and contradictory. Sometimes he interrupted her while giving her opinion, which he had asked, with the reprimand: "Why do you interfere, Madame?" To-day the ministers censured what yesterday the bishops had approved; to-morrow Louis ascribed the ill-success of a measure to him by whose advice it was undertaken. His confidence always directed him to Madame de Maintenon; his desire of glory often removed him from her. The difference of their piety

likewise produced a difference in their sentiments. Madame de Maintenon had always been devout, and Louis only for a few days. Both had scruples respecting the most innocent pleasures; the one from austerity, the other from ignorance. Neither could dispense with the society of the other, and yet they could not fail to produce reciprocal *ennui*. The king had an aversion to all the relatives of Madame de Maintenon, and this antipathy he often displayed in the most mortifying manner. Fortunately, these misunderstandings almost always passed over, without the necessity of a mutual explanation.

"The public was not silent, though the court despised its wit or its malignity. Sometimes Madame de Maintenon was represented between Scarron and the king, smiling at one, and filliping the nose of the other. Sometimes Louis was exhibited looking through Madame de Maintenon's spectacles, and Pontchartrain leading him by a thread. William III. said of him: 'The king of France is not like any other king; he has ministers of eighteen, and mistresses of eighty.'

"After this sketch," says Beaumelle, from whom I have borrowed the preceding particulars, "who can contemplate the

highest degree of favour without shuddering?" What must have been the feelings of Madame de Maintenon during the last years of the king's life, when so early as 1684 she wrote as follows to her brother: "After those who occupy the highest places, I know none more unhappy than those by whom they are envied."* If, indeed, any one were desirous of curing himself or others of sentiments of ambition, and producing a conviction of the vanity and danger of temporal grandeur, let him only study or recommend the history of Louis XIV. his wife, mistresses, and ministers, and all the persons belonging to the royal family. All these, though the objects of envy, were more unhappy than those by whom they were envied, not only at the period of calamity and disgrace, but even at such times when fortune seemed to anticipate all their wishes, and to accomplish all their designs, almost without their co-operation.

Had the great dauphin, as he was called, survived his father, it can scarcely be doubted that he would have repeated the spectacle exhibited by Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon, and which was

* *Letters de Madame de Maintenon*, I. p. 179

long considered as *unique* in its kind.* Monseigneur at last became enamoured of Mademoiselle de Choin, a maid of honour to the princess of Conti, who was as much inferior to Madame de Maintenon in personal and mental qualifications as the dauphin to his father.† Mademoiselle Choin exactly imitated the conduct of Madame de Maintenon. She rejected all the solicitations of the dauphin till he acceded to a private marriage. Louis XIV. was apprised of this connexion between the dauphin and Choin, and Madame de Maintenon approved and promoted it; either to render the dauphin more favourably disposed towards her, or to induce him to desist from opposing the public declaration of her marriage with the king.‡ Mademoiselle de Choin conducted herself at Meudon, in the presence of the dauphin, toward the princes and

* *St. Simon*, V. p. 105, &c. *Richelieu*, I. p. 138. *Beaumelle*, IV. p. 165, &c. These three writers, though they differ in many particulars, correspond however in the principal points. They even write the name in various ways, as *Choin*, *Chavoin*, *Chouin*.

† *St. Simon*, as above. "Choin n'a jamais été qu'une grosse camarde brune, qui avec toute la physionomie et le jeu d'esprit n'avoit l'air que d'une servante, qui, longtemps avant cet événement étoit devenue excessivement grosse et puante."

‡ So marshal de Richelieu assures us.

princesses of the royal family, in the same manner as Madame de Maintenon did at Versailles. In the familiar circle, she was seated in an arm-chair, when the duchesses of Burgundy and Berry had nothing but stools, and she said, as dryly as Madame de Maintenon, *la duchesse de Bourgogne, la duchesse de Berry, le duc de Berry*, when she spoke of those persons of the royal family. The extraordinary matches of the king and his son, occasioned the duchess of Burgundy to say jocosely: "I should like to die before my husband; but, at the same time, I should wish to see how he went on after my death. I am convinced that he would marry one of the *Sœurs Grises*, or a nun out of the convent of St. Marie."*

After the examples of the king and his son, the other princes of the blood, the ministers, the generals, and their favourites, were governed by their wives or mistresses. This is demonstrated by many of the testimonies and anecdotes which I have introduced, and which render it unnecessary to enter into more minute details

* St. Simon heard this *bon mot* of two ladies the same day that it was uttered: he, therefore, deserves more credit than Beaumelle, whose relation is somewhat different.

respecting the influence of amorous intrigues on public affairs. The importance of women could not fail to increase in the same proportion as the government became more despotic, and when the most important matters were not decided in council by the majority of votes, but between the king and individual ministers, or other confidants.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Fashions in Dress during the Reign of Louis XIV.

THE court of Louis XIV. and the capital of France, were not imitated so closely by the European princes and nations in any other respect, as in all those things which belong to the empire of fashion. In this point, the most inveterate enemies, and the warmest admirers of the French and their monarch, alike concurred. In France itself, it was acknowledged, that the introduction and imitation of French fashions in the rest of Europe, were productive of incalculable advantage to that country; that not only an immense profit was derived from the sale of fashionable commodities, but that negociations and other affairs were thereby greatly facilitated; that the French were everywhere looked up to as patterns, and the peo-

ple inspired with the most favourable prepossessions.*

Louis himself created the spirit of fashion, which prevailed during his whole reign. On account of his love of pomp, the gentlemen and ladies of the court studied magnificence and splendour rather than beauty in dress, ornaments, and furniture, or at least never chose what was beautiful; unless it was at the same time brilliant. To this splendour and sumptuousness in attire, furniture, and decorations, it was owing, that the fashions changed more frequently than at any former period, but not so often as to sustain a comparison with later times. The new stuffs and fashions of female attire were invented by the youngest and the most beautiful females of the court, principally by the mistresses of the king; and those

*St. Evremond, III. p. 114. IV. p. 228. "Foreigners, ashamed of their good sense, as of a rustic quality, endeavour to gain importance by imitating our fashions, and renounce essential qualities to affect an air and manners which it is almost impossible for them to acquire. Thus, these incessant changes in furniture and dress, for which we are reproached, and which are still followed, becomes, without our being aware of it, a very wise procedure; for, besides the prodigious sums we derive from it, a much more solid advantage than would be imagined results from having Frenchmen dispersed all over the world; they form the exterior of nations after ours; they first subjugate the eyes, and gain over the senses in favour of our empire," &c.

who could not attain to the honour of invention, at least aspired to the fame of improving upon newly-adopted fashions. Among the gentlemen of the court, there were no such patterns for their sex as Madame de Montespan, Mademoiselle de Fontanges, and their friends, were for the ladies, and yet much greater revolutions took place in the dress of the former than in that of the latter. These new costumes introduced by the men were also of much longer duration, than the innovations in female fashions, many of them having been retained till our own times, or till very near them.

During the regency of Anne of Austria, the men in general, if not universally, wore their own hair cropped, undressed, and unpowdered; suffering their beards to grow, or at least having mustachios. Under Louis XIV. the beard entirely disappeared among the courtiers. They began to cover the head with enormous wigs, which not only came low down over the forehead and temples, but likewise depended all down the back.* The

* *La Bruyere*, p. 249. "Those who live in this country have a physiognomy which is not clear, but confused, lost in a load of false hair, which they prefer to their own, and with which they make a long tissue to

friends of the good old times, who could not resolve to sacrifice their own hair to a load of artificial locks, complied so far with the reigning fashion as to have it curled and powdered *à la perruque*. This was done by the great Condé himself, at the marriage of his son, the prince of Conti; and the curled and powdered head of the hero, and his smooth chin, were the prodigies that attracted the greatest notice at that brilliant solemnity.* Between 1680 and 1690, wigs were universally worn both by old and young; though it could not be denied that they altered the physiognomy to such a degree, that one friend scarcely knew another; yet it was thought that this alteration was highly advantageous, and that a full-bottomed peruke made a person appear at least

cover the head; it reaches down to the waist, changes the features, and prevents you from knowing persons by their faces."

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, IV. p. 308. "I have an extraordinary piece of news to tell you; the prince yesterday caused his beard to be taken off; he was shaved. This is no illusion, nor one of those things which are said to the wind; it is strictly true, as the whole court can bear witness. A valet-de-chambre, abusing his patience, likewise dressed and powdered his hair, and at length reduced his appearance to that of a perfect courtier, with a head which eclipsed all the perukes. This was the wonder of these nuptials."

twenty years younger.* So late as the nuptial festivities of Louis XIV. the French courtiers were distinguished by short and close doublets, and wide breeches, with enormous bunches of ribbons at the knees. After the death of cardinal Mazarin, the waistcoats received the addition of long skirts, and the doublets were transformed into coats which buttoned before. As the gentlemen no longer went to court on horseback, but in carriages, the custom of wearing boots there fell quite into disuse. The breeches knees and shoes were not fastened with strings, but with buckles. The hats assumed a triangular form, and were not only adorned with white feathers, but also with gold lace. The borders and seams of the coat and waistcoat were also decorated with the latter. Rich embroidery,

* Thus, for instance, Madame de Sevigné says of her old friend Corbinelli, *Lettres Nouvelles*, p. 28. "You would not know him again. I must inform you that he has begun to wear a wig like other men. It is no longer that little frizzled head, like nothing but itself; you never saw such an alteration; it has made me tremble for our friendship. It was no longer his hair to which I was attached upwards of thirty years. My secrets, my old habits, were all shaken. He was younger by twenty years, and I no longer knew where to look for my old friend. I am not yet reconciled to this fashionable headdress, and I find beneath it the head of our Corbinelli."

attached more abundantly to the waistcoat than the coat, was still more common. The prince of Conti wore on his wedding-day a coat of straw-coloured velvet, with black flowers, round the edges of which was an embroidery of large diamonds.* The mantle of the prince was lined with black satin, which was studded with small stars of diamonds.† The duke and duchess de Bourbon, and also their daughter, had three dresses embroidered with as as many different kinds of precious stones, that they might appear with new splendour on each succeeding day of the festival. Louis XIV. himself constantly wore a brown, or brownish coat with a light embroidery, and a richly embroidered waistcoat of scarlet, blue, or green cloth, or satin. He had neither rings nor precious stones, excepting in the buckles of his shoes, knees, and hat. The blue ribbon, worn on grand occasions, was likewise bordered with stones, which were valued at eight or nine millions.‡ The uniform of the court,

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 309. "The ground-colour of the coat was not at all liked. Madame de Langeron, who was *l'ame de toute la parure de l'hôtel de Condé*, fell sick on account of it."

† "La doublure du manteau du prince de Conti etoit de satin noir piqué de diamans, comme de la moucheture."

‡ *St. Simon*, I. p. 180, 181.

which it was deemed a great favour to obtain permission to wear, was richly embroidered with gold and silver.* The waistcoats were not buttoned at the breast, and the sleeves of the coat were much too short to reach to the hand. On this account the men wore laces for their frills and ruffles; but these laces were not so fine as those used by the ladies. Madame de Maintenon reprimanded her brother for always chusing the most costly articles of dress, and wearing finer laces than the king himself. "Men," she observed, "never had fine laces, on account of the continual washing; these were only for ladies, who use their laced clothes half a year together without having them washed."† Fashion, ever busy in the work of creation and destruction, has certainly changed the forms and the dimensions, the colours and decorations, of all the articles of men's apparel, times out of number, since the age of Louis XIV. It must, nevertheless, be

* *St. Simon*, p. 139.

† *Lettres*, I. p. 115. "Jamais les hommes ne les portent fins à cause du continuel blanchissage. Ces fins-là sont pour les femmes, qui mettent un mouchoir six mois sans le faire blanchir."

obvious to all, that the general outline and the principal forms and divisions have been retained till the present time.

Under Louis XIV. as at every other period, the hair and the head of females were the parts on which Fashion chiefly exercised her plastic powers. At the beginning of 1671, all the ladies of the court had their hair dressed in a hundred little ringlets. This fashion, in which one Montgobert was the greatest adept, had supplanted another *à la paysanne*, by which the hair was so parted, as to form a deep furrow along the middle of the head, which was consequently left bare.* At the time when small ringlets encircled all the heads of the courtly fair, without exception, some of the youngest and most beautiful females, Madame de Montespan, Madame de Thianges, and their friends, took a fancy to part their hair again in the middle of the head *à la paysanne*, and to cut it on either side at intervals, so as to form large curls, which fell with graceful negligence about a finger's breadth below the ear, excepting

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, I. p. 120. "Toutes les dames en sont encore a cette jolie coeffure, que Montgobert sçait si bien, je veux dire, ces boucles renversées."

one that sometimes hung down upon the bosom.* The hair was decorated as before with ribbons, or adorned with an elegant *coeffure*, which the young and fashionable ladies very often omitted.† The beautiful Madame de Nevers was one of the first that adopted the new fashion. At the same time she went considerably farther than the inventress. She had not only the front hair, but all the rest of it, cut and dressed in such a manner, that her whole head was covered with curls. The first time she appeared in this style, it was laughed at as a most unnatural exaggeration, and her head was compared with a cauliflower.‡ Madame de Nevers, how-

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, p. 153. "Imaginez vous une tête partagée à la paysanne jusqu'à deux doigts du bourrelet; on coupe les cheveux de chaque coté d'étage en étage, dont on fait de grosses boucles rondes et négligées, qui ne viennent plus bas qu'un doigt au dessous de l'oreille; et une grosse boucle nouée entre le bourrelet et la coeffure; quelquefois on la laisse trainer jusques sur la gorge."

† *Ibid.* 1. p. 153. "On met le rubans comme à l'ordinaire." And again, p. 120. "Madame de Nevers n'avoit point de coëffe. Mais encore passe, elle est jeune et jolie."

‡ *Ibid.* p. 119. "Madame de Nevers y vint coëffée à faire rire. La Martin l'avoit bretaudée par plaisir, comme un patron de mode excessive. Elle avoit donc tous les cheveux coupez sur la tête, et frisez naturellement par cent papillotes, qui la font souffrir toute la nuit; cela fait une petite tête de chou ronde, sans que rien accompagne les coteż."

ever, was soon imitated by many other females, who made the king, and the greater part of the ladies that still adhered to the old fashions, almost kill themselves with laughing.* Among these laughers was Madame de Sevigné, who, on the eighteenth of March, gave her daughter the first account of the new fashion, and how excessively ludicrous it appeared. All this laughter and ridicule did not prevent the new fashion from gaining in a few days every eye and every heart, and even making converts of those who had been loudest in condemnation of it. On the third of April, the queen and all the ladies of the court had their hair cut off, because the king had observed that short hair and large curls looked better than long hair and small ringlets.† Madame de Sevigné changed her opinion as suddenly as the king. On the fourth of April she writes to her daughter: "A certain degree of the new fashion has pleased me exceedingly; and I cannot help telling you, that you have no farther occasion to give yourself the trouble of making a hun-

* "Mais que toutes ces femmes de St. Germain se fassent tetonner par la Martin, cela est au point que le roi et toutes les dames en pament de rire."

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, p. 154, 155.

dred little ringlets about the ears, which soon fall out of curl, never look well, and are now as much out of fashion as the head-dress of the time of queen Catharine de Medicis. I am likewise a convert to it. This new fashion of dressing the hair is admirably suited to your face; it will make you look like an angel." A female friend of Madame de Sevigné and her daughter feelingly lamented that she had not discovered this charming style, as she was twenty times very near it.* The beautiful Madame de Soubise, apprehensive lest she should suffer from the tooth-ach, if she parted her hair down the middle of the head, had a new *coëffure* made by Mademoiselle de la Borde, which looked as well on the sides as the new fashion so generally adopted, but with respect to the top of the head, was far inferior to the other.† Madame de Montespan, at the period when she was in the highest favour, made this alteration in the head-dress invented

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, I. p. 152, 155.

† *Ibid.* p. 156. "Madame de Soubise qui craint pour ses dents, ne s'est point fait couper les cheveux; et Mademoiselle de la Borde lui a fait une coëffure qui est tout aussi bien que les autres par les côtez: mais le dessus de la tête n'a garde d'être galant, comme celle dont on voit la racine des cheveux."

by her, that she not only adorned her hair with black ribbon, but with the richest jewels, and had one ringlet descending from either temple upon her cheeks.*

A head-dress which received its name from the fair Fontanges, was more generally adopted and maintained its ground longer than any of the fashions of dressing the hair, invented by the ladies at the court of Louis XIV. This last professed mistress of the king, one day, in the early part of their connexion, accompanied him to the chace. On this occasion she wore a richly embroidered robe, and a small hat adorned with the most superb feathers. Towards evening, the wind became so high as to oblige the lady to put off her hat and feathers, and to have her hair fastened up with ribbons, the ends or bows of which fell down upon her forehead. This *coëffure*, the production of mere accident, pleased the king so much, that he requested his mistress to retain it the

* *Lettres de Mad. de Sevigné*, IV. p. 193. "Elle etoit coeffée de mille boucles; les deux des tempes lui tomboient fort bas sur les joues, des rubans noirs à sa tête, des perles de la maréchale de l'Hôpital, embellies des boucles et des pendeloques de diamans de la derniere beauté, trois ou quatre poinçons, point de coëffe; en un mot une triomphante beauté à faire admirer à tous les ambassadeurs."

rest of the evening. The next day all the ladies appeared dressed in the same manner; and hence arose those high head-dresses, which for more than one generation were worn at the court of France, and thence found their way into every part of Europe.* The longer the *fontanges* were worn, the heavier they became. "The duchess du Maine," says Madame de Maintenon in one of her letters, "can scarcely support the weight of gold and precious stones. Her head-dress is heavier than herself."† Louis XIV. vehemently expressed his dislike of these prodigious head-dresses, but in vain. The earl of Shaftsbury being at that time the ambassador of England at the court of France, his countess had recourse to ridicule, and in a short time they disappeared, to the no small mortification of the haughty monarch. Nevertheless, *fontanges* of moderate dimensions were still retained. Madame de Maintenon divided the ladies of St. Cyr into four companies,

* *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, III. p. 189, 190. "Voila l'origine de ces grandes coëffures qu'on porte encore, et qui de la cour de France ont passé presque dans toutes les cours de l'Europe."

† *Lettres*, II. p. 180. Elle succombe sous l'or, sous les pierreries. Sa coëffure pese plus que toute sa personne."

according to the colour of their *fontanges*. The spirit of devotion which began to pervade the court soon after the introduction of *fontanges* probably contributed more than any thing else to their long duration.

The ladies of the French court under Louis XIV. were more extravagant in painting than in any other part of their toilette. "The women of the court," says La Bruyere,* accelerate the decline of their charms by the unnatural arts with which they think to heighten their beauty. They paint their lips and their cheeks, their eye-brows and their shoulders, which as well as their bosoms, are exposed to view, nay even their arms and their ears." "If the ladies," observes the same writer, in another place,† "adorn themselves with a view to please the men, I declare to them in the name of my whole sex, or at least of the major part of it, that red and white paint renders them ugly, and even disgusting, and red paint alone makes them look old, and disguises them so that they are not to be known; that the men like to see them with white lead

* P. 249.

† P. 121.

upon their faces as little as they do with false teeth in their mouths."

The stuffs of which the state dresses of the ladies were composed during the reign of Louis XIV. were costly beyond belief. Madame de Montespan, on the day that she excited general admiration by her beauty and dress, appeared in a robe that was made entirely of the finest lace.* Previous to the nuptials of the daughter of the minister Louvois, the fashionable world throngedr to see the bridal dress, as to the opera. Of the stuffs of gold, there was none but what had cost twenty louis d'ors per ell.†

Louis XIV. had been for some time attached to Madame de Montespan, before any visible consequences of his love ensued. When she, at length, became pregnant, she was solicitous to conceal her condition. For this purpose, she invented a costume, which, though not favourable to the display of a fine figure, was, however, universally imitated.‡ It

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, IV. p. 193.

† *Ibid.* V. p. 199. "On va voir comme l'opera les habits de Mademoiselle de Louvois. Il n'y a point d'etoffe dorée, que de vingt Louis l'aulne."

‡ *Mém. de Mad. de Maintenon*, II. p. 2. *Hist. Amour. des Gaules*, III. p. 240. "Cela fut cause qu'elle

cannot be supposed that this fashion survived the influence of its inventress.

Considering the astonishing pomp displayed in dress and ornaments, it is rather surprizing that a bed bordered with gold-lace and a valet-de-chambre were deemed proofs of unpardonable luxury, even in ladies of quality belonging to the court. "Had I an income of fifty thousand livres," writes Madame de Maintenon, "I would not have a bed bordered with gold-lace, like Madame de Fayette, neither would I keep a valet-de-chambre after the example of Madame de Coulanges. Is the pleasure they receive from these things an equivalent for the raillery to which they expose them?"*

inventa une nouvelle mode, qui étoit fort avantageuse pour les femmes qui vouloient cacher leur grossesse; qui fut de s'habiller commes les hommes, à la reserve d'une jupe sur laquelle à l'endroit de la ceinture on tiroit la chemise, que l'on faisoit bouffer le plus qu'on pouvoit, et qui cachoit ainsi le ventre."

* *Lettres*, I. p. 114. One of the most interesting of the letters of Madame de Maintenon is the 55th, in the first volume, in which she gives her sister-in law a daily and yearly statement of the domestic expences of a family of twelve persons. It mentions the prices of the principal necessaries of life in 1679; from which it appears that, at this period, a family of twelve persons might live very creditably at Paris for 12,000 livres a year.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Influence of the Court of Louis XIV. and of French Manners in general on the other Courts and Nations of Europe.

When Louis XIV. began to reign without any prime minister, the French court and the French nation had for a century and a half been in many respects, the models of other European courts and nations. By his rare personal qualifications, by the dazzling splendor of his court, by his unexampled power and revenues, and the extraordinary glory which the talents and achievments of the ministers and generals whom he found in office and command, had acquired him, Louis XIV. completed what his predecessors had begun. From the years 1661 and 1662, most of the European princes endeavoured to extend the limits of arbitrary authority, and to increase the sources of their revenue, that, like Louis XIV. they might be enabled to

augment the number of their troops, and the pomp of their courts, to construct and improve magnificent palaces and gardens, to give splendid *fêtes*, to introduce expensive amusements, and finally, to keep beautiful mistresses. Most of the reigning princes and their successors visited France, that they might have an opportunity of contemplating the court which they emulated, and forming themselves by it; and this example of the princes was universally followed by the opulent nobility. Not a few foreign princes and men of high rank were so fascinated by charming French women, that they either married them, or took them home in the quality of mistresses. Others, though proof against the spells of love, were ensnared by French flatterers and favourites, whom they afterwards invariably preferred to their own faithful subjects and servants. If princes were prevented by circumstances from visiting the French court, still they were so thoroughly convinced that France was the only school of genuine politeness, of good taste and fashion; and that it was impossible to acquire the accomplishments of dress and manners, the arts of fencing, dancing, and riding, except in France, or of Frenchmen; that they

engaged at a great expence, French governors or companions, French fencing, dancing, and riding masters, and French valets de chambre, to compensate in some measure for the want of a journey to France. No sooner had the natives of that country obtained a firm footing, and considerable influence, than they knew how to contrive matters, so that their relatives of both sexes were sent for, and provided with lucrative places or pensions. Under these circumstances it was perfectly natural that most of the European courts should be peopled with French men and French women; that most of the princes should be governed, either by the one or by the other; that the French language should become the language of the great and polite world; that palaces, pleasure-houses and gardens, furniture and equipages, dress and ornaments, fêtes and diversions in the greatest part of Europe, should be planned by French masters, and copied from French patterns. Through the example of Louis XIV. the prodigality of princes, and the profligacy of mistresses were carried to such lengths, that many reigning houses were ruined, and involved their subjects in the general calamity. At most courts the French lan-

guage and the French fashions took such deep root, that the most tremendous of all revolutions, which menaced the higher orders with inevitable destruction was unable to eradicate them.

Among all the princely contemporaries of Louis XIV. none entertained a greater partiality for French manners, and none sacrificed his own glory and the welfare of his subjects to the French interest, more than Charles II. of England. This monarch had spent the fairest portion of his life in France, and hence arose his predilection for a court which had protected him from the murderers of his parent. Charles, it is true, was recalled by his repentant people to the throne of his fathers, too early to witness the splendour of the court of Louis XIV. This, however, did not prevent him from imitating and endeavouring to please the admired monarch as far as his situation permitted. Charles II. at least equalled Louis XIV. in respect to politeness, and the talent for telling a story, and surpassed him by many degrees in lively and pleasing wit.* "King

* Buckingham's character of Charles II. in the Preface to *Rochester's Works*, p. 55. "Witty in all sorts of conversation, and telling a story so well, that, not out of flattery, but the pleasure of hearing it, we seemed ignorant of what he had repeated to us ten times before."

Charles," says Hume, "being in his whole deportment a model of easy and gentleman-like behaviour, improved the politeness of the nation, as much as faction, which of all things is most destructive to that virtue, could possibly permit. His courtiers were long distinguishable in England, by their obliging and agreeable manners." In no respect did Charles so nearly resemble Louis XIV. as in his attachment to mistresses; and in none was he so unlike the latter as in his aversion to ceremony, pomp, and ostentation. To these he was such an enemy, and at the same time so indolent, that with the happiest wit and the most majestic figure, he could not prevail upon himself to act the king for a single moment, either in parliament, or in the cabinet; and that he not only loved to renounce all distinctions of rank and birth himself, but was even pleased to see others forget them. This abhorrence of all restraint, and this indolence rendered him an easy prey to all those by whom he was immediately surrounded, or who had any indirect influence over him. He was naturally attentive to his health, and so incapable of any exertion, that, from his own impulse he would never have been guilty of excess, even

in the indulgence of his ruling passion, the passion for the sex. But, for this very reason, because he had not power to resist, he suffered himself to be allured by his worthless favourites and mistresses into the lowest and most disgraceful debaucheries.* The amiable monarch and his no less amiable seducers of both sexes, infected the whole court and capital. The predominant vices of the king and his court were exhibited on the stage in the most fascinating forms; crept into the works of the most celebrated writers, and were diffused by both throughout the whole nation. At no period of the two last centuries were the poets and dramatic writers so licentious as during the reign of Charles II. and this licentiousness was not less prejudicial to the arts and sciences than to public morals.†

Charles II. was not content with having several concubines in succession, or, for a

* *Hume.* "In his pleasures he was rather abandoned than luxurious; and like our female libertines, apter to be persuaded into debaucheries for the satisfaction of others, than to seek, with choice, where most to please himself."

† *Hume.* "And it was then found that the immeasurable licentiousness indulged at court, or rather applauded, was more destructive to the fine arts, than even the cant, nonsense and enthusiasm of the preceding period."

short time together, at once. He continually kept a seraglio about him, and, nevertheless, laid snares for all the beautiful women of the metropolis. The older he grew, the more numerous was his harem; the duke of Buckingham is of opinion, that "in his latter times, there was as much of laziness as of love in those hours he passed with his mistresses, who, after all, only served to fill up his seraglio; while a bewitching kind of pleasure, called sauntering, and talking without any constraint, was the true sultana queen he delighted in." If he himself but enjoyed pleasure and entertainment, he cared but little if others participated in them. Of this want of jealousy his mistresses availed themselves, indulging all their fancies and caprices with as little scruple as the king. Though he never loved or possessed one exclusively, yet almost every one in her day had such influence over him, as if she had been the sole mistress of his heart; and hence it was, that, as the earl of Rochester says in one of his epigrams, though Charles never said a foolish thing he never did a wise one.

During the whole reign of Charles II. the females who possessed the longest and the most ruinous influence over the king were

Mrs. Palmer, afterwards duchess of Cleveland, and Mademoiselle de Keroualle, who was created duchess of Portsmouth. The former, a woman prodigal, rapacious dissolute, violent, revengeful, ruled during the first ten years of the king's reign. One of the first things she did, was to accomplish the disgrace of lord Clarendon, that she might be able to govern, by means of her creatures, with the more absolute sway. The overweening consequence of this first ruling mistress of the king, was at least greatly diminished, if not totally destroyed by the arrival of the fair Keroualle. Charles's sister, the first wife of the duke of Orleans, conducted the lovely Frenchwoman to her brother in 1670, that, by her charms, she might gain the monarch, who was an easy conquest, and thereby attach him the more firmly to the court of France. Both these objects were attained. Mademoiselle de Keroualle inspired Charles with a passion so violent, that, immediately after her return, and the sudden death of his sister, he sent her, through his ambassador, an invitation to London, which she gladly accepted.*

* Hume says that Charles received the fair Keroualle immediately from the hands of her illustrious conductress.

She became his professed mistress, and in that quality, was soon afterwards created duchess of Portsmouth; riches poured in upon her, and she acquired and retained till the king's death, a greater influence than Madame de Montespan enjoyed at the same period in France.* Charles not only communicated all the affairs of state, in private, to his new mistress, but he directed, or at least allowed, all the foreign ambassadors to treat with her, as with his prime minister.† If the duchess of Portsmouth merited this favour by her extraordinary and almost unperishable beauty,‡ she rendered herself unworthy of it by her insatiable lust, which, only such a prince as Charles II. could have beheld with indifference.§

De la Fare, on the contrary, affirms, that she did not go to reside at London till after the death of Madame.

* *Hume.* "He was extremely attached to her during the whole course of his life; and she proved a great means of supporting his connexions with her native country."

† *De la Fare*, p. 204. "Elle y fit la même figure que Madame de Montespan en France, et encore plus considerable en ce qu'il lui communiquoit toutes les affaires, et que tous les ambassadeurs traitoient avec elle. Il lui donna bientôt des sommes immenses et le titre de duchesse de Portsmouth, et elle ne contribua pas peu à la parfaite intelligence qui fût toujours entre les deux rois."

‡ Voltaire saw her when she was very far advanced in years, and was, even then, struck with her beauty. *Siecle de Louis XIV.* II. p. 55.

§ See, in particular, *Rochester's Works*, I. p. 71, 73.

Notwithstanding all her influence, she was as incapable of fixing Charles II. as he was of gratifying her unbounded appetite. In the very first year of her favour, Charles II. kept, besides herself and two other mistresses of quality, two actresses, Mrs. Davis and Nell Gwyn. His attachment to the latter was the strongest and most permanent. "Kerouallé," says Madame de Sevigné, in a letter to her daughter, has attained the object she had in view. She wished to be the mistress of the king of England, and she is his mistress. The king passes almost every night with her, in the face of his whole court. She is amassing riches, and takes care to make herself honoured and feared, as far as lies in her power, by all. But yet she did not foresee that she should meet with a young actress, with whom the king is enchanted, and from whose company she cannot detain him a single moment. The king divides his time, his attentions and his health between the two. The actress is as saucy as the duchess herself. She defies the latter, gives her battle, and frequently bears the king away as her prize.

368, and the poem by the Earl of Dorset, II. p. 28, &c.

She boasts of the advantages she obtains over her rival. She is young, bold, gay and voluptuous. She has borne the king a son, and is desirous that he should be legitimated. 'The duchess,' says she, 'affects to be a woman of consequence. She pretends that she is allied to every family of the highest rank in France. When any person of quality dies, she immediately goes into mourning. If she is really of such high rank, as she pretends, why has she made herself a whore? She ought to die of shame. As for me, I only follow my profession. I have no wish to appear any thing but what I am. The king keeps me, and to him alone I now belong. He is the father of my son. I am anxious he should acknowledge him, and I am sure he will, because he loves me, at least, as as well as he does the duchess of Portsmouth.' This creature keeps possession of the field, and reduces the duchess to the greatest embarrassment."*

The same year in which this letter was written by Madame de Sevigné, the fairest of the Mancini's, whose hand Charles II. had, at one time sought to obtain, repaired to London, to avoid the persecutions of her

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, III. p. 224

husband, the duke de Richelieu, and, if possible, again to awaken the tender sentiments of the king.* It would not have been difficult for her, by means of her unparalleled beauty,† to have supplanted the duchess of Portsmouth, who was then ailing, had she not been as frail as Charles himself. At the very moment when the king was about to declare his passion, she became enamoured of the young and handsome prince of Monaco. This preference vexed Charles II. to such a degree, that he rescinded the pension of four thousand pounds sterling, which he had at first given to the duchess de Richelieu. The friends of the fair duchess, procured, indeed, the renewal of the pension, but the king was lost for her for ever. Nevertheless, her house became the rendezvous of all that were distinguished for birth, rank, talents, and attainments, both at court and in the capital. People of quality here found an agreeable amusement, and men of learning and science acquired the politeness of courtiers.‡ Her house was known by the

* *Vie de St. Evremond,* p. 175, 181.

† *St. Evremond,* IV. p. 88.

‡ *Vie de St. Evremond,* p. 183. "Les grand seigneurs, les ministres étrangers, les dames les plus qualifiées s'y ren-

appellation of the court,* which it retained till the queen of this court, becoming possessed with the dæmon of play, spent night and day in the company of gamesters. With their other manners, the French could not fail to communicate to the English that destructive spirit of gaming, by which they were infected.

The inhabitants of the United Provinces were much more fortunate than the English. They adopted French fashions and social amusements, but, at the same time, guarded against the introduction of French gallantry and its attendant vices. St. Evremond is a most unexceptionable witness, that a few years before the dreaded invasion of Louis XIV. the simplicity and innocence of manners prevailing at the Hague itself, were as remarkable as at the period of the greatest poverty, or, as they could possibly be in the remotest corners of the republic.

"As nothing in this world is quite perfect," says the above-mentioned author, in 1665, in a letter to the marquis de

doient assidûment. Les houretes gens y trouvoient un amusement agréable et les savans y apprenoient à devenir polis."

* *St. Evremond*, IV. p. 163.

Crequi,* "you find here more honest than polite men, more judgment in business than pleasing talents for entertainment. The women are very polite, and the men take no offence if you prefer the company of their wives to their own society. The Dutch women are sociable enough to amuse, but not sufficiently animated to disturb our peace. You must not imagine that there are not some very amiable persons among them; but you have nothing to hope from them, either on account of their virtue, or their natural coldness, which supplies the place of virtue. Be this as it may, so much is certain, that, throughout all Holland, a certain coyness and reserve have been handed down as an ancient and universal practice, which, like a kind of religion, is transmitted from the mother to the daughter.

"In the unmarried females, there is, to be sure, no want of gallantry; on the contrary, it is permitted them as an innocent way of obtaining a husband. Some terminate this gallantry by an advantageous marriage, others flatter themselves with the vain hope of a settlement, which is always deferred, and comes

* *St. Evremond*, II. p. 400.

to nothing at last. These delays must not be ascribed to wilful and premeditated perfidy. A man grows tired of a female, to whom he has for some time paid his addresses; and with this feeling, he cannot resolve to make a wife of her who has hitherto been his bride. Though he will not come to the point, he cannot venture to recede, lest he should be thought a deceiver; and thus, partly from custom, and partly from false notions of consistency, he keeps alive the embers of a long extinguished flame. Such instances bring the youngest of the unmarried females to reflection. They regard matrimony as a happiness, and their virgin-state as the condition in which they ought to remain.

"The women are, without exception, of opinion, that when they are once united to a husband, they have no longer any free will of their own. They merely acknowledge the simplicity of their duty, and would scruple to retain the freedom of their inclinations, which, elsewhere, the coyest, notwithstanding their dependence in other respects, are accustomed to reserve. Here every thing passes for inconstancy, and inconstancy, which, at gallant courts, is deemed highly meritorious, is abhorred as the grossest of vices by these good people,

whose general conduct and form of government display much wisdom, but who are little acquainted with polite manners. Husbands recompence the fidelity of their wives, by great submission. If, contrary to the general practice, a husband were to assume the control of his house, his wife would be universally pitied, as a most unhappy woman, and he himself would be stigmatized far and near, as one of the most wicked of men.*

"I shall say nothing to you concerning the Hague. Suffice it to observe, that all foreigners are enchanted with it, even when they have seen the splendour of Paris, and the rarities of Italy. You find in that place, houses enough to form a large and handsome town; and, at the same time, trees and alleys sufficient to make you think it the most enchanting solitude. In the time occupied with business you find the quiet of rural retirement; and in the hours devoted to social pleasures, you are surrounded with the bustle of the most populous cities. In these

* Ker of Kersland, in his *Remarks upon Holland*, says, that it was a general observation, that where the wife had the direction of the business, and of money-matters, a bankruptcy very rarely occurred, because a true Dutchwoman devoted herself entirely to her profession.

hours, the houses of the Hague are easier of access than those of Paris; but, at other times, when a too systematic regularity keeps strangers aloof, and confines families to business, it is more difficult to gain admittance, than into the houses of Italy."*

The accession of Philip V. to the throne of Spain, produced a much smaller change in the Spanish nation, and even in the Spanish court, than the mere example of the corrupted French, the subjects of a despot, had effected in Holland, free, and yet undepraved. The French ardently desired the abolition of the ancient etiquette of the court. The princess Ursini actually brought about such a revolution, that the ladies of the palace relinquished the *tontillo*, or train which covered the feet,† that the gentlemen adopted the practice of wearing wigs, that they waited on the queen at her toilette, and were not

* The assemblies lasted only till eight o'clock. The ladies, at least, retired at that time, but the young prince of Orange played, at most, half an hour longer. *Gourville*, II. p. 2. At the time of the *Fronde*, the assemblies of Mademoiselle d'Orleans, at Paris, lasted from five till nine, and there was commonly dancing at these assemblies. *Mém. de Montpensier*, I. p. 250.

† *Mém. de Noailles*, II. p. 275, 6.

‡ *Labat*, I. p. 165. *Noailles*, II. p. 224. The Spaniards desired that none but the hair of persons of quality might be used in making the king's wigs.

scandalized if foreign ambassadors likewise attended, or if their king and queen sometimes danced after dinner or supper. The king, moreover, gave permission to every person at his court to dress as he pleased, either in the Spanish or French fashion. In other respects, both sexes in Spain continued to dress, to live, and practise the same gallantries towards each other as they had formerly done.* Philip V. whom nature had made much more of a Spaniard than a Frenchman, easily and cheerfully accommodated himself to the Spanish customs; and his example was followed by most of the French of both sexes, who accompanied him to Spain, or had previously settled in that country. Philip could not escape the general lot of the kings and princes of his age; but was governed for a great number of years by a French female adventurer. This was the celebrated princess Ursini. Anne de la Trimouille, for this was her

* Respecting the beds, the seats and repasts of the Spaniards, see *Labat*, I. p. 160, 161. On the long garments of the Spanish ladies their small shoes, and the careful concealment of their feet, p. 163, 4. On the gallant flagellations of the men, and the practice of sprinkling ladies with their blood, p. 187. On the liberties in which Spanish ladies indulged themselves on festivals and at processions, p. 262, 3. Labat was in Spain in 1706.

family name, was first married to a prince de Chalais, who left France on account of a duel. She followed her husband to Spain, and thence proceeded to Rome, where she received intelligence of the death of the prince. She then applied to the cardinals de Bourbon and d'Estrees, who, at first, from motives of compassion, and afterwards of love, took the forlorn fair one under their protection. The two cardinals, in 1675, brought about a marriage between the accomplished widow and the duke Bracciano. By the superior qualities of her mind and person, she assembled around her in the Ursini palace, a court, which the duke was obliged to tolerate, though he beheld it with a jealous eye.* After the death of her second husband, she sold the dukedom of Bracciano, to a nephew of Pope Innocent XI. and assumed the title of princess Ursini. Under this name, cardinal d'Estrees recommended her to another of her lovers, cardinal Portocarrero, as *cammerara major* to the first wife of Philip V. of the house of Savoy. The princess obtained the high appointment. By the extraordinary charms of her person and conversation,

* *Mém. de St. Simon*, III. p. 176, &c.

and still more by the energy and the greatness of her mind, she acquired the confidence of her mistress, as well as of the king, in such a degree, that she might be regarded as the sole and absolute sovereign of Spain.* The first disgrace which Louis XIV. drew upon her, was attended with no other consequence than this, that she returned to Madrid invested with greater power and glory than before her departure from that capital.† Her influence daily increased, and, on the death of the queen, who seemed to be fascinated by her, she even conceived the idea of marrying the king of Spain. Her unbounded ambition and haughty neglect of the French court, at length brought her to the brink of that precipice into which she was hurled, at the very moment she imagined that she had established her power too firmly to be shaken.‡ In all probability, Louis XIV. and his grandson, at the instigation of Madame de Maintenon, secretly conspired, with the second wife of Philip V. of the house of Parma, the fall of the princess Ursini, who had again procured the ap-

* For an account of her character, see *St. Simon*, III. p. 180, 181.

† *Ibid.* p. 211.

‡ *Ibid.* V. p. 219, &c.

pointment of *camerara-major*. At the first interview, the young queen abused her without any just cause, in the harshest language, and when the princess Ursini began to vindicate herself, the queen commanded her instantly to retire, and gave directions that she should be conveyed without a moment's delay to the frontiers; which orders were executed in the most punctual manner.*

In Italy the French fashions were more prevalent than French manners;† though the latter more readily found access in Upper Italy, on this side of the Appennines, and even in Rome, than in Spain. The influence of French manners was, however, neither general nor permanent. At Rome, the houses of Ursini‡ and Colonna§ were accommodated to the French system. At Venice, the *nobili* admitted strangers of distinction into their family

* *Mém. de St. Simon*, p. 229, &c.

† This is asserted, in several places, by Labat, who, at the commencement of the last century, resided several times in Italy. See among others, III. p. 248. The fashions, it is true, were not changed so often as in France.

‡ *St. Simon*, as above,

§ "The house was open to all persons of distinction of both sexes, and that air of freedom which la Connetable Marie Mancini had introduced, still prevailed there." *Saxe Galante*, p. 118.

circles.* At Florence the intercourse between the sexes, at the commencement of the last century, was almost as free and unrestrained as at Paris. This liberty was too incompatible with the jealous spirit of the Italians of that time, not to be very soon circumscribed.† Even at Florence, all young females belonging to families of quality were most strictly confined from their tenth or twelfth year, till the period of their marriage. Maundy Thursday was, as formerly, the only day in the whole year, on which they were permitted to leave the house of their parents, and to go to church. At home, even brothers could not obtain a sight of their sisters, except through crevices, keyholes, or strong grating.‡ In most parts of Italy, married women of the middling and lower classes, durst not appear in public, or go into a shop to buy any thing, unattended. If a woman had no

* *Saxe Galante*, p. 70.

† *Labat*, II. p. 135. "Some years since, they had carried matters to such a length in this point, that they would soon have placed their husbands on the French footing, if these gentlemen, who are very wise and enlightened in every thing relating to their own interests, had not soon applied remedies adapted to the nature of the case."

‡ *Ibid.*

servant maid, she agreed with one or more of her neighbours, that they should mutually accompany each other; or she hired one of the aged matrons, who made it their business to attend other women, at the rate of two *bajocchos* an hour.* The same services, which in other places were performed by women, were rendered at Messina by men of irreproachable character, who felt themselves impelled to dedicate their time to the fair of their city. These esquires spent the whole morning in attending the ladies to the churches, and from the churches back to their homes.† Though the Sicilians were more jealous than the other Italians, yet they had not the least scruple to entrust their wives with esquires of tried probity.‡ Ladies of quality were not permitted to go to church at all, but were obliged to

* *Labat*, III. p. 246.

† *Ibid.* V. p. 142. "There are men of known prudence, of an irreproachable life, of a fidelity proof against all the solicitations and all the offers that could possibly be made them, who, after having sworn to acquit themselves of their employment with honour and integrity, are admitted to the quality of esquires, to accompany the ladies to church, and to take them home again. These esquires are not attached to one single lady."

‡ *Ibid.* p. 143. "When the probity of an esquire is acknowledged, husbands are solicitous to entrust their wives to his care."

perform their devotions in the chapels belonging to their houses. Those of inferior rank, who went to church, were kept apart from the men. This separation did not extinguish gallantry in the latter, or tender sentiments in the fair sex. The Sicilians were as great proficients in the language of the eyes and fingers as the Spaniards: and as the courtiers of Madrid thought it an honour to be in love with some lady of the court, so the Sicilian gentlemen sought subjects for amours in convents and conservatories, where neither walls nor grates could exclude their wishful looks, or the eloquent language of their fingers.* The *religieuses* of Italy, like those of Spain, enjoyed, in general, much greater liberty than the fair children of the world. The convent of Santa Clara, at Naples, contained at least four hundred nuns of the most distinguished families, who were by no means subject to rigid confinement. The inhabitants of this convent were allowed, on the contrary, to receive visits at all hours from persons of both sexes, and to hold numerous mixed assemblies.† The cicis-

* *Labat*, V. p. 143, 144.

† *Ibid.* V. p. 266,--7.

beos, as they were denominated, are mentioned by Labat, only in treating of Genoa. They were something more than the esquires at Messina, being not only the attendants of the ladies, but also their friends or admirers. A cicisbeo dedicated his services to one lady alone; and yet these gallants excited no more jealousy in the husbands than the professed lovers of the married ladies of the Spanish court. It may be confidently affirmed, that the Italian cicisbeos derived their origin, either from the Spanish *Guardadamas*, or from the *Galanteos de Palacio*. At a more remote period, the Italian females actually had occasion for esquires or cicisbeos to defend them from the violence and insults to which ladies were frequently exposed, even till the beginning of the last century. These disgraceful practices were of two kinds; the unmanly perpetrators, either covering them with blood and filth, or cutting their faces.* When the latter was not done with a sharp knife, but the wounds were inflicted with the edge of a piece of money, they left seams which neither skill nor time could ever efface.

* The former was called *smerdare una dama*, and the latter *sfregiare*. *Labat*, III. p. 31.

However irreproachable the character of females might be, they were, nevertheless, so highly disgraced by these insults that they durst not again appear in public, but were obliged to remain continually shut up in their own houses, or to retire to a convent. In the rest of Italy it was customary, in religious processions, for the ladies who were at the windows, or in the balconies, to strew flowers over the host, or over the statues of the saints, as they passed. At Genoa, the ladies threw flowers upon the gentlemen to whom they were favourably disposed; and these marks of favour were repaid with low bows, by their grateful gallants.*

If we except Sweden, during the reign of the antigallican Charles XII. the French fashions and manners made a much greater progress in the northern regions, and especially in Germany, than in Spain and Italy. Peter I. it is true, had neither French mistresses, nor French favourites. He was more partial, upon the whole, to the Germans, the Dutch, and the English,

* *Labat*, II. p. 63. "The ladies were at the windows, and received abundance of low bows from those on whom they threw flowers, according to custom." Respecting the women of Bologna, Labat observes, that they drank as much wine as the men. II. p. 158.

than to the French. He, nevertheless, modelled the costumes and diversions after the French pattern; so that the language and fashions of France acquired and maintained in Russia a pre-eminence over those of all other countries.

In Denmark a princess de la Trimouille, was in as high favour with the king as with the queen to whom she was related. She was charged with endeavouring to produce an impression on the heart of monarch;* but these attempts, if they ever were made, proved unsuccessful. On the other hand, she captivated the king's brother, prince George, and the chancellor, count von Greiffenfeld. The king supported his minister; the queen, her brother-in-law, and her niece, the princess de la Trimouille, whose affection for the prince was equalled only by her hatred of the chancellor.† The two lovers sought to surpass each other in martial achievments, in the war in which Denmark was

* *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 24. "Mademoiselle de la Trimouille consoled herself in Denmark for not having been able to make a conquest of the king, with captivating his brother and the chancellor."

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, III. p. 251,--2. Madame de Sevigné received this information from the princess of Tarento, of the house of Cassel, who resided at the same time with her in Bretagne.

then engaged with Sweden, and particularly at the siege of Wismar. The chancellor at length contrived matters, so that prince George was obliged to marry a foreign princess.* The removal of his rival did not, however, tend to promote the amorous views of the royal favourite. The princess, in 1680, married count Anthony of Oldenburg, whom love and the king of Denmark recommended with equal warmth.†

The heroic John Sobieski, before he was elected king of Poland, married the princes dowager de Radzivil, daughter of the marquis d'Arquien.‡ The glorious conqueror of the Turks suffered himself to be ruled by his imperious consort, in such a manner, that he thereby not not only alienated the affections of his people, but lost no small portion of his fame.§

* He married Anne, the second daughter of James II. and afterwards queen of Great Britain and Ireland.

† *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 478. 9.

‡ *Coyer Hist. de Jean Sobieski*, I. p. 221, &c.

§ *Ibid.* III. p. 96, 144. One of the court-chaplains publicly declared, in the presence both of the king and queen, that there were kings who confessed small sins, but were silent concerning those of greater magnitude. "We know a prince," continued the preacher, "who thinks it no sin to sell the offices of the republic, and to sacrifice his country to a blind fondness for his wife." III. p 144.

After the decease of the king, his widow lived many years at Rome, upon the treasures, which she had, with great difficulty saved, and at length died in her native country, at the castle of Blois.*

Of all the courts of Germany, the imperial court was least infected with the manners of the French. Frederic I. of Prussia, on the contrary, imitated Louis XIV. in profusion and pomp, if not in other respects.† For the diversions of the court, Italian operas, French comedies, tables, dresses, &c. patterns were sought at Paris and Versailles. Every young man of rank, who had not resided for some time at the court of France, was regarded as a fool. Women of quality, at the court of Berlin, sent to Paris. not only for their dresses and attire, but even for husbands.‡

* *Coyer Hist. de Jean Sobieski,* III. p. 308, 313.

† *Mém. de Brandebourg,* II. p. 63. III. p. 75, 76, 4to. Berlin, 1768.

‡ *Ibid.* III. p. 76. "All Germany travelled thither. A young man passed for an idiot, if he had not resided for some time at the court of Versailles. The taste of the French governed our kitchens, our furniture, our dress, and all those trifles, to which the tyranny of fashion extends its empire. This passion, carried to excess, degenerated into madness. The women, who frequently ran into extremes, carried it to a pitch of extravagance." The mother of M. Von Canitz bespoke a handsome young man for a husband, from Paris. One who was neither hand-

The two queens of Prussia, Sophia Charlotte,* and Sophia Dorothea,† as well as the electress Sophia of Hanover, and the hereditary princess of Brunswick, afterwards princess of Wales,‡ were the greatest ornaments of their sex, for their exalted virtues, their enlarged understandings and extraordinary attainments; and all these princesses borrowed of the French, only those things in which they excelled other nations; their polished language, their literary master-pieces, and their characteristic politeness. Sophia Charlotte, of Prussia, occasioned the foundation of the Academy of Sciences of Berlin, and it was she also, that induced Leibnitz, by his *Theodicia*, to soothe those minds which Bayle's works had filled with anxious doubts. The empresses Amelia and Elizabeth, and in particular, the electress Sophia and the princess of Wales, honour Leibnitz with as large a portion of their confidence, as Sophia Charlotte of Prussia.§ The electress Sophia had no small

some nor young was sent her, and, nevertheless, she married him.

* *Mém. de Brandebourg*, III. p. 71.

† *Mém. de Pöllnitz*, I. p. 40, 41.

‡ *Spittler's Geschichte von Hanover.* II. p. 322. *Memoirs of John Ker, of Kersland*, I. p. 83, &c.

§ *Ibid.* I. p. 83.

share in the elevation of the truly noble house of Guelph,* which, for the beauty, the talents, the virtues, and the accomplishments of its princes and princesses, deserved the foremost place among all the illustrious families in the world. The dukes, George William, John Frederic, and Ernest Augustus entertained a great, and the two former, but too great a partiality for foreigners in general, and Frenchmen in particular.† Their consorts invited whole hosts of Frenchmen into the country and to the court, which was almost completely frenchified.‡ Under John Frederic, and still more under Ernest Augustus, the court of Hanover was one of the most splendid, and, at the same time, one of the least corrupt in Germany.§ It is scarcely possible that

* *Spittler*, II. p. 322.

† *Ibid.* II. p. 230, 293, 299, 301. *Ker's Remarks*, p. 113, 114. *Mém. de Pöllnitz*, I. p. 96-99.

‡ *Pöllnitz*, I. p. 99.

§ "He keeps a very splendid court," says Ker, of Kersland, "having in his stables, for the use of himself and children, no less than fifty-two sets of coach-horses." In the *Lettres Hist.* for the month of April, 1692, T. I. p. 462, it is observed, "The court of Hanover is very grand. The countess de Plato makes a great figure there, having more than eighty domestics in her service. She receives visits from eleven o'clock till noon. At dinner, she keeps an open table, which is served with great magnificence. A great degree of freedom prevails there, but

such a circumstance could have happened at the court of Hanover, as is related by Elizabeth Charlotte, duchess of Orleans, concerning a maid of honour at Brunswick,*

Under the elector, Frederic Augustus, afterwards king of Poland, the Saxon court was much more splendid, and, at the same time, much more corrupt than the Hanoverian. That prince had acquired the French language, and the French manners so perfectly, that even actresses of that nation would not believe him to be a Saxon.† Frederic Augustus surpassed

it is, nevertheless, accompanied with great respect. The evenings are spent at play and in other diversions, sometimes at the house of one, and sometimes at that of another."

* *Confessions*, p. 71. A maid of honour repeatedly sighed so loud, as to be heard by all the company at the table of the prince. Some one at length asked her whether those sighs were extorted by the misconduct of her *serviteur*, (meaning her lover.) "*Cherviteur*." replied she, "what *cherviteur!* I have only stuffed my guts till they are ready to burst."

† Du Porc, with whom he became acquainted, under the name of count of Torgau, said to him, "You must be a Frenchman; you have the wit, the air, and the politeness of one." *Saxe Galante*, p. 340. Frederic Augustus of Poland, Frederic I. of Prussia, Anthony Ulric, duke of Brunswick Lüneburg, John William, elector of the Palatinate, and the landgrave Charles of Hesse were honoured as zealous patrons of the arts. *Mém de Pöllnitz*, III. p. 279.

Louis XIV. not only in the number of his mistresses, but likewise, if we compare the territories and revenues of the French monarch with those of the elector of Saxony, in the profusion in diversions, magnificent palaces, furniture, and dress, into which he was led by his numerous mistresses.* The countess of Donhof cost him more than the countess of Cosel; but the latter governed the whole state and her illustrious lover, for the longest time, and with the most unlimited sway.† If Frederic Augustus had not two professed mistresses at once, like Louis XIV. he had commonly a private favourite besides his public mistress.‡ Louis affected the highest degree of magnificence in every thing excepting his own person. Frederic Augustus was as prodigal in his own attire as in that of his fair mistresses,

* See, for instance, the account of the festivities and magnificence at Moritzburg, in honour of the countess of Königsmark, *Saxe Galante*, p. 189, &c. the description of the house and superb furniture of the countess of Cosel; *Ibid.* p. 295, lastly, the festivities in honour of the princess Lubomirski, *Ibid.* p. 244. *Life of count Brühl*, p. 37

† "She governed with such absolute sway, that she might be said to be the mistress of the king and of the state." *Saxe Galante*, p. 284, 297.

‡ For instance, the daughter of the French tavern-keeper, at the same time with the princess Lubomirski, and Du Porc with the countess of Cosel. *Ibid.* p. 357.

and displayed the same kind of profusion as the young French princes exhibited on grand occasions.* Females of the highest distinction endeavoured to attract the notice of Frederic Augustus, as of Louis XIV. The splendors with which the condition of mistress was surrounded, as completely eclipsed the disgrace of adultery, or of the sacrifice of virgin honour, at the court of the Saxon sovereign, as they did at that of the French monarch.

No other German court was, at such an early period, so perfect a copy of the court of France, as the Bavarian, where Mademoiselle de la Perouse, at the same time governed the mother of the *dauphine de Bavière*, and was the mistress of her father.† The whole court was astonished at the young dauphiness, who was regarded as a prodigy of understanding, politeness, and knowledge.‡ She not only spoke, but

* For instance, at the festivities in honour of the young countess of Königsmark, "his clothes were embroidered with diamonds and pearls." *Saxe Galante*, p. 190.

† *Mém. de Maintenon*, II. p. 23, 24. "French women celebrated for their beauty, introduced our luxury and our passions into foreign courts. Mademoiselle de la Perouse governed the electress of Bavaria, though she was the mistress of the elector."

‡ *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 449. "Madame la Dauphine est une merveille d'esprit, de raison, et de bonne education."

acted like a native of France, who had passed all her life at the court of Versailles, such good sense, such charms, and such dignity did she display in all she said and did.* When she passed through Strasburg, the deputies of that city addressed her in the German language. "Gentlemen," said she, in French, "speak to me in French, for I no longer understand German." As she approached nearer to the time and place of her union with the dauphin, her letters to her future husband were more and more tender; and the expressions of her tenderness rose by such delicate and insensible gradations, that her understanding was thence concluded to be highly cultivated and refined.† On her arrival at Versailles, she made as favourable an impression upon the king, the dauphin, and the whole court, as she had done on Madame de Maintenon, and the other ladies who had been sent to meet her. The king, at first, passed several hours a-day in the company of the dau-

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 387, 8. "elle est toute Françoise." And again, p. 419. "C'est une personne enfin d'un bel et bon esprit; elle a des manieres toutes charmantes et toutes Françoises; elle est accoutumée à cette cour comme si elle y étoit née.

† *Ibid.* V. p. 388.

phiness. Notwithstanding her solicitude to gain the favour of the king, still she acted and lived after her own way. She loved neither play nor the chace, but was fond of reading, dancing, walking, or female occupations, and agreeable conversation with accomplished persons.* Her great circle lasted only an hour every day; and she was not to be seen at her toilette, or on retiring to bed.† Malicious persons inspired her with groundless suspicions of Madame de Maintenon, her second *dame d'atour*. The princess became cold towards that lady, on whose account the king had so highly distinguished her. The king now ceased his attentions to the dauphiness; and with him, she was forsaken by the greatest part of the court.

The natural disposition of the dauphiness to solitude and sadness, was aggravated by the uneasiness which the intrigues of her husband occasioned, to such a degree, that she at length fell a prey to real melancholy, and died prematurely, after a cheerless residence of ten years at the court of France.‡

* *Lettres de Sevigné*, V. p. 49.

† *Ibid.* p. 449.

‡ "The poor princess," says the countess de la Fayette, in her *Mémoires de la cour de France*, shortly before the

Elizabeth Charlotte, duchess of Orleans, of the house of the Palatinate, though educated at the polished court of Hanover, remained through her whole life a German princess, and was proud of being a German. She possessed sufficient gaiety, understanding, and wit, to surmount all the difficulties and embarrassments which the intrigues of the French court threw in her way, to inspire her husband and the king with genuine esteem, and to command the fear or the respect of all the rest. The illustrious princess could no more accustom herself to French kickshaws, than to French intrigues. She took neither chocolate, coffee, nor tea; and ate neither pheasants nor French ragouts. Beef, veal-cutlets mutton-chops, fowls, venison, bacon, sour-crout, cabbage, sallad, pancakes with red herrings, raw

death of the dauphiness, "looks only at the dark side of things, and takes no share in any pleasures. She has a very bad state of health, and a melancholy disposition, which, added to the little attention that is paid her, takes away that pleasure, which any other person besides herself would feel, in being so near the highest place in the world." The concluding observation does little honour to the understanding of the countess de la Fayette. Any person might, without deserving the least reproach, be very near the highest place in the world, and yet, from various moral and physical causes, b totally indifferent to all worldly grandeur.

ham, and Brunswick sausages, were her favourite dishes, and most of these prepared in the Saxon way, but especially the latter, she brought into vogue at the court of France.*

* See her *Confessions*, p. 96.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Condition of the Female Sex during the Regency of the Duke of Orleans.

IMMEDIATELY after the death of Louis XIV. circumstances evinced in a horrible manner, how great had been the secret corruption of morals at the court of that monarch, and how little the exterior appearance of devotion had encouraged real virtue and piety. The duke of Orleans being elevated to the regency, continued his former course of life, and the court rejoiced that it could now follow the example of the prince, and indulge every vicious passion without restraint. The change of the government produced no extraordinary or violent revolution in morals; but each only exhibited himself in his true colours. Unbounded licentiousness succeeded the former hypocrisy. People were fond of vice, not merely for

the sake of the pleasure, but also on account of the *eclat* and the glory, connected with the highest refinement or depravation of sensual gratifications. It is certainly a great injustice to the abbé, and afterwards cardinal Dubois, to consider him as the sole corrupter of the prince, and the prince as the only corrupter of his court. With the natural disposition of the duke-regent, had Dubois never existed, he would have fallen into the hands of some other seducer, or he would have corrupted himself. In like manner, the French court, without the example of the regent, would have made less show of vice, but, in fact, it would have been little better than it actually was; unless in this single case, that it had pleased Providence to allot to the French a king, possessing as much wisdom and energy as genuine virtue, and he had employed these gifts of heaven, during a long reign, for the benefit and amendment of his people. The system of Law and the reverses of fortune it occasioned in many thousands of families, produced still more mischievous effects than the example of the regent. These effects, however, were not so new a phenomenon as the system itself, but seemed to be only a progressive deve-

lopment of evils, the seeds of which had been sown long before, and which had acquired such strength, that they could not be eradicated. The more attentively we compare the occurrences during the regency of the duke of Orleans, with the previous and succeeding events, the more thoroughly we shall be convinced that things were long proceeding in a regular and steady progression, from bad to worse. This melancholy career was not checked by the death of the regent, or the downfal of Law's system, but terminated under one of the best of kings that ever swayed the sceptre of France, in the total subversion of the throne, and the destruction of the nobility and clergy, who involved hundreds of thousands of virtuous and innocent men in their common ruin: an event which enlightened patriots, had announced a whole century before it actually came to pass.

According to the testimonies of all cotemporary historians,* scarcely any mortal ever united in so high a degree as the duke regent, the happiest talents for all the fine and useful arts and sciences, with

* *Richelieu*, II. p. 67. *Duclos*, II. p. 6. *St. Simon*, VI. p. 61, 65, 146, 151. VIII. p. 139, 140.

such an unaccountable aversion to every thing commendable and virtuous; such soundness, promptitude, and acuteness of understanding, with such inanity and indolence of mind; such exalted virtues, among which personal valour and unwearied placability were particularly distinguished, with such a propensity to the most degrading vices; such talents for governing others with such a disposition to suffer himself to be enslaved by the vilest of wretches; in a word, so many rare qualifications both of the heart and mind, with such a total inability to make a good use of them. On this account, all the historians of the time, mention a fable, in which the mother of the regent admirably delineated the character of her son.* "There was once a princess," says this fable, "who was delivered of a fine boy. The illustrious mother, according to ancient custom, invited to the birth of her son, all the fairies of heaven, except one, who was forgotten. The festival was held with great pomp. Each of the fairies made the new-born prince a valuable present. One gave him valour, another cle-

* *Richelieu*, II. p. 67. *Duclos*, I. p. 211. *St. Simon*, as above.

mency, a third wit, a fourth, understanding, a fifth beauty, a sixth strength and vivacity, and others liberality and a love of the arts and sciences. After each had presented her gift, the fairy who had been forgotten, arrived, full of secret vexation at the neglect she had experienced. She resolved, after the example of her companions, to make the prince a present, which might, at the first view, appear advantageous, but which should, in reality, prove prejudicial. She gave him good-nature, without determining its degree; and this good-nature was so great, as to render all the other gifts which the prince had received, totally useless." In fact, good-nature, or rather weakness, was a more predominant feature in the character of the duke-regent, than in that of his father and grand-father. He was not only exempt from all feelings of revenge on account of personal insults, but he could not prevail on himself to punish, when the public welfare called for severe chastisements.* He submitted to be

* *Duclos*, II. p. 6. "Neither good turns nor ill, neither services nor offences made any profound impression upon him; he gave, but never rewarded; he pardoned with facility; was scarcely capable of esteem, and still less of hatred."

continually governed by worthless men, and by the most depraved of these, by Dubois, who, in regard to the qualities of the heart and understanding, attainments and experience, was greatly his inferior. Often did he keenly feel the disgraceful servitude in which he was held, but yet he had not the courage or the energy to shake off his fetters.* Such was the weakness of the duke-regent, that, on the most important occasions, when his own welfare or that of the kingdom was at stake, he relinquished with shame, the firmest resolutions, in spite of the conviction of their propriety, merely to get rid of the importunities of a man, whom he might have silenced with a few authoritative words, and whom he had even predetermined to silence.† Had the duke of Orleans followed the suggestions of his own heart and understanding he would have been one of the best of regents. He proved, on the contrary, one of the worst, because he placed himself under the dangerous

* *Duclos*, II. p. 274. "Never was servitude more disgraceful than that to which this prince submitted; though he felt it most grievously, and was ashamed to acknowledge it, yet he had not sufficient energy to to emancipate himself."

† See, in particular, *St. Simon*, VII. p. 194. VIII. p. 139, 140. 146--151.

guidance of the cardinal Dubois, who sacrified every consideration to his private interest, and even harboured the design of trampling on his benefactor.

To this weakness of character, which afforded free scope and assured perfect impunity to infidelity and vice of every description, were added two other foibles, which plunged the regent into the most scandalous irregularities, and decided the tone of public morals during the period in which he held the reins of government. The one was a singular and unaccountable sickliness of mind, the other a violent and invincible propensity to women. The faculties of the duke-regent's soul resembled the digestive powers of many persons who have an inordinate and incessant appetite; who crave and devour all that comes in their way, but are unable to digest what they have swallowed; who every moment feel the sensation of hunger, but no sooner begin eating than their stomachs are palled. The mind of the regent of France roved from one art and science to another. Scarcely had it tasted of one, when it began to experience disgust; it found, at least, no satisfaction in the study, and hence it was, that with the most splendid abilities, and the most multifarious attain-

monts, this prince possessed no resources within himself, so that he was wholly incapable of seeking entertainment when alone. He was born to *ennui;* compelled continually to flee from himself, he found satisfaction no where but in the bustle of war, in the din of battle, or the wild uproar of the turbulent debauch.* Neither the pleasures of the table, nor those of love and conviviality had the least charms for him, unless they were carried to the highest pitch of extravagance, and were equally injurious to health, decency, and morals. He therefore assembled round him a number of persons of both sexes, of a disposition congenial with his own, to whom he himself gave the appellation of *Roués.*† With this company he first held his infamous orgies, first at the Palais Royal in Paris, and afterwards at St. Cloud.

* *St. Simon*, VII. p. 65. "Il etoit né ennuyé, et il etoit si accoutumé à vivre hors de lui-même, qu'il lui etoit insupportable d'y rentrer, sans être capable de chercher lui-même à s'occuper. Il ne pouvoit vivre que dans le mouvement, et dans le torrent des affaires, comme à la tête d'une armée, ou dans le bruit et la vivacité de la debauche: il y languissoit, dès qu'elle etoit sans bruit, et sans une sorte d'excès et de tumulte, tellement que son temps lui etoit penible à passer."

† The names of the principal of the *Roués* of both sexes, are given in *Mém. de Richelieu*, I. p. 69, 71. *St. Simon*, XII. p. 182, &c.

The *Roués* met regularly every night at the hour of nine, and sat down to an elegant supper, from which all restraint and all inequality were banished. Here every guest said, and very often did, whatever he pleased. The candles were sometimes extinguished, that they might be at liberty to indulge in excesses, which even the *Roués* themselves could not have beheld without blushing. At these dissolute parties the regent was informed of the novelties of the day. Here religion, and all that was once sacred and venerable were made the subject of the most blasphemous raillery. Here were related the most scandalous anecdotes; here were sung the most obscene songs; here were heard the loud bacchanalian laugh and wild uproar. The regent strove to surpass his guests in every thing that was calculated to afford pleasure to the company. The greater progress others had made in every species of debauchery, and the longer they had practised it, so much the more highly he esteemed them.* The revels of the re-

* *St. Simon*, VII. p. 61. "It was this that often led him to commit actions so extravagant and indecent; and, as he wished to surpass all his companions, to mingle in his parties the most impious discourses, and by way of refinement in wickedness, to indulge in the most unex-

regent were commonly kept up till day-light, when the exhausted *Roués* sunk rather into the stupor of intoxication than into a refreshing slumber. For an hour after he awoke, the regent was generally so beclouded by the fumes of the champaign, that he was unfit either for business or for serious conversation. Whenever he had joined the company of the *Roués*, he was inaccessible to every other person. That the pleasures of the table might not be checked by the presence of servants, the dishes, and every thing else that was wanted, were sent in and conveyed away again by means of machines.

Cardinal Dubois soon perceived that the regent took less pleasure in his orgies than he had been accustomed to do. Apprehensive lest remorse or *ennui* might conduct the prince, who was easily cloyed, but never satisfied, from bad company into good, he and his mistress La Tencin, sought a new seasoning, or new charms, to give a relish to the prince's nocturnal revels. The most notorious prostitutes of Paris were sent for, to communicate new

ampled debaucheries on days the most sacred. The older and the more extravagant a person was in impiety and debauchery, the greater was the estimation in which he held him."

pleasures by their embraces, or to teach new arts of voluptuousness. That these extraordinary members of the secret order of vice might not know whither they were conveyed, a bandage was tied over their eyes before they set out; and the regent and the other *Roués*, who wished not to be recognized, wore masks while they were present. At other times, the opera was obliged to furnish the best dancers of both sexes, who danced naked the most lascivious ballets. After these voluptuous spectacles, which were denominated *Adam's Feasts*, were repeated about twelve times, the regent grew tired of them. On this, the ingenious Tencin invented the *Feasts of Penitents or Flagellants*, as they were called; at which, the *Roués* were furnished with scourges, in order to rouze by blows the dormant senses. The idea of this amusement appeared so excellent to the cardinal, that he instantly posted away to the regent, to communicate to him the important discovery. As the duke could not see him directly, he sent an urgent request for an immediate audience, because his business would not admit of delay. The regent rewarded the cardinal with the most violent bursts of laughter, and acquiesced in

the proposed feasts, on condition that the cardinal should be of the party, and be scourged till he bled. At length La Tencin wrote a history of all the celebrated voluptuaries of ancient and modern times, and likewise of all the arts that have ever been invented to excite sensual appetite, or to heighten, to prolong, or to multiply the pleasures of love. These animated descriptions were accompanied with the most appropriate graphic illustrations; and from these the abominations of the Tiberius's and the Messalinas of ancient times, were acted over again at the court of St. Cloud.* But the more the senses of the regent were stimulated, the more the pleasures of the table and of love were refined upon, the sooner he became cloyed and disgusted. A short time before he appointed cardinal Dubois prime minister, the regent himself acknowledged to the duke de St. Simon, that he was thoroughly convinced of the disgraceful and mischievous tendency of his nocturnal carousals; that he not only felt the truth of his friend St. Simon's representations, but was obliged to go still farther, and acknowledge, that he no longer had occa-

* *Richelieu*, as above.

sion for women; and that wine, instead of giving him pleasure, only excited disgust.* When the charms of pleasure ceased to allure the regent to these nocturnal debaucheries, habit forced him to participate in them against his will; and, instead of husbanding the remaining powers of nature, he continued his excesses, till death prematurely hurried him to the tomb.

At a less corrupt court, the bacchanalian orgies of the regent would have produced, not imitation, but abhorrence. At the French court but too many emulated his example.† It was, however, reserved for seventeen gentlemen of the court, almost all of whom belonged to the first families in the kingdom, to crown these scenes of infamy by one still more revolting. These miscreants publicly indulged their unnatural propensities one summer's night be-

* *St. Simon*, VIII. p. 139. "Il me dit que tout cela étoit vrai, et qu'il y avoit pis encore... qu'il n'avoit plus besoin des femmes, et que le vin ne lui étoit plus rien, et que même il le degoutoit. Mais, Monseigneur, m'ecriai-je, par cet aveu, c'est donc le diable que vous possède de vous perdre pour l'autre monde et pour celui-ci."

† *Richelieu*, II. p. 132. "The court of the regent, who revelled in pleasures, furnished a pattern for the other princes, and for people of all ranks. All were eager to imitate the orgies of St. Cloud, and of the Palais Royal."

neath the open windows of the palace, in the presence of many persons of quality of both sexes.* The regent, cardinal Dubois, and their associates, only laughed at the unparalleled audacity of the wretches; and nothing but the general clamour of the court and capital obliged the duke of Orleans to confine the most guilty in the Bastille, or to send them to their regiments, or to exile them to their estates.† As far as the corruption of morals had extended under Louis XIV. from the court and capital into the provinces, so far did the influence of the orgies of the duke of Orleans penetrate during the regency.‡

The second natural foible of the duke of Orleans, which gave the tone to public morals during his regency, was a strong propensity to women, without real love, without jealousy, without esteem for the

* *Richelieu,* III. p. 317, &c.

† The greatest teacher of this horrible practice was the chevalier Morell, who openly bought up handsome boys, like horses, and who constantly attended the opera, principally to seek purchasers, and to conclude advantageous bargains. *Anecdotes of the duchess of Orleans,* p. 289.

‡ *Mém. de Richelieu,* T. IV. P. II. p. 4. "Ce libertinage bruyant, qui pervertit nos mœurs, fut porté ensuite, vers la fin de la regence à un tel point de scandale, qu'on vouloit l'imiter dans les societés particulieres de la capitale: d'ou il s'etendit dans toutes nos provinces."

sex, or even for those individuals whom he chose to be the partners of his bed. The mother of the regent observed, rather too bluntly, but not the less truly, that her son used women like a private convenience on urgent occasions, without feeling the least affection for them.* The regent was wholly unsusceptible of the tender passion; he could not comprehend what it was to be in love, and was firmly convinced that no such passion existed, except in novels and romances.† If any of his mistresses conceived a genuine and exclusive affection for him, and expected a like attachment in return, this was a sufficient motive for him to break with her, because such a passion was oppressive, and he was incapable of feigning a tenderness that he did not feel.‡ Almost all his mistresses had other lovers during their connexion with him. Though he well knew this, yet he punished neither

* *Anecdotes of the duchess of Orleans*, p. 195. *Confessions*, p. 43.

† These are expressions used by the regent himself.

‡ *Anecdotes*, p. 196. "He quarrelled with Seri, because, as he says, she wanted him to love her like a shepherd. He has often made me laugh at the gravity with which he complained of this; indeed, it vexed him not a little. Hence it is evident, that my son is incapable of real love."

their inconstancy, nor the audacity of his rivals. He never removed them out of the way, except when they wholly engrossed his mistresses, or rendered it difficult for him to obtain access to them. The number of his professed mistresses was very great, but still greater was the number of those on whom he condescended to bestow his favours, as it were, *en passant*.* Every woman that fell in his way was welcome to him; and those that offered themselves were so numerous, that they even went into his bed without his knowledge, with a view to anticipate others.† The regent adhered the longest to Madame de Parabére; but neither she nor any other woman could boast the exclusive possession of his heart and person. The regent took pleasure in the jealousy of the females, with whom he was connected at one and the same time.‡ This jealousy was only a foible of novices; those of longer standing acquired the easy disposition of their common lover, gave

* Respecting the mistresses of the regent, see *Richelieu*, II. p. 244. III. p. 211, 308, &c. *St. Simon.* VII. p. 94, 95. XII. p. 189.

† *Confessions*, p. 43. *Anecdotes*, p. 197. His mother often reproached him for his want of delicacy, and his amours with so many plain women.

‡ *St. Simon*, VII. 94, 95.

friendly entertainments to each other, and carried their disinterested love so far as to seek new candidates for the favours of the prince.* Those of the highest quality treated such as were of inferior rank as though they had been their equals; all of them assumed an equal degree of familiarity with the regent, who *thoud* his female friends, and desired to be *thoud* by them.† The regent had less gallantry than love, and still less discretion than gallantry. He proceeded at once to the point, and told every one that chose to hear him whose favours he had enjoyed.‡ When his mother reprimanded him

* *Richelieu*, III. p. 309. "The duchess du Gévres and Madame de Sabran likewise continued their former way of life with this prince. These ladies were neither jealous nor inimically disposed. They invited each other to entertainments, paid mutual visits, even lent one another their lovers, and sought new mistresses for the prince."

† All these ladies visited Emilie and the other actresses; the women of rank spoke in a tone of equality to those who were not. "The women in general, except such as were in years, or belonged to the old court, or were professed devotees, were solicitous to obtain access to the interior of this court." An instance of familiarity may be found in the *Mém. de Richelieu*, III. p. 211.

‡ *Anecdotes*, p. 157. "My son has no notion how to gain the affections. His manners are not polite enough for him to feign to be in love. He tumbles into the room head foremost. He has no discretion, no secrecy. He tells every thing that has passed. I have repeated to him, a hundred times, that I wonder how the women can run

for his indiscretion, he would reply, laughing: "You are not acquainted with our female debauchees. A man does them a favour to say that he lies with them."*†

The shamelessness of the regent encouraged his daughters, most of the other princes and princesses, and the greater part of the gentlemen and ladies of the court to equal audacity in vice. Among the daughters of the regent, there were two who were stimulated by the example, but still more strongly by the incestuous passion of their father, to gratify every vicious propensity, and to trample in public on virtue, morality, and decorum. The duchess de Berry and the princess de Valois belonged to the number of their father's mistresses,† and for this reason they thought themselves authorized to do whatever they pleased. The former, in particular, carried the gratification of her wild and contradictory caprices to a pitch of evident insanity. She was so proud and inflexible, that she demanded higher honours than any queen of France had

after him as they do; and that they ought much rather to avoid him."

* "Vous ne connoissez pas les debauchées d'à present. Dire qu'on couche avec-elles c'est leur faire plaisir."

† *Richelieu*, II. p. 78, 84, and 240.

ever required; and on no occasion complied with the wishes of her mother, her husband, and least of all her father, unless her own humour had previously dictated the accomplishment of the object of their request. This same haughty and unbending woman, nevertheless, degraded herself by associating with persons who were no less her inferiors in education than in birth; and with astonishing patience suffered her lovers to treat her with the same caprices, by which she herself tormented all the rest of the world. The duchess de Berry changed her paramours almost as often and as publicly as her father did his mistresses. At length, however, her equally unconquerable and incomprehensible passion fixed upon the count de Riom, one of the ugliest men belonging to the court, with an ardour which continued undiminished till her death.* Towards every other person, the count de Riom was politeness itself; to his illustrious mistress, on the contrary, he was the most rigid of tyrants, because his uncle, the duke de Lauzun, had taught him that, to keep an enamoured princess under con-

* *Richelieu*, as above. *St. Simon*, VII. p. 11, &c. *Duclos*, I. 245. II. 5.

troul, it is necessary to rule them with a rod of iron. The duchess of Berry durst neither go abroad, nor chuse, or put on any particular dress, without the approbation of her secret husband, for they had actually been married in private. At the moment when she was stepping into her carriage to go to the opera, she was often obliged to return and stay at home. She was frequently forced to change her clothes and ornaments, when she had been dressing for hours, to please the count, who then could not endure the very things with which he had previously expressed his satisfaction. On most occasions the princess readily submitted to the most unreasonable caprices of her lover. If she ever shewed a disposition to oppose the will of her lord in any other way than by tears, he chastised her, as masters are accustomed to punish their slaves, or parents their unruly children, and as the duke de Lauzun had chastised the princess de Montpensier. Even after she had suffered the grossest ill-treatment, the duchess de Berry was always the first to make overtures of accommodation, amid tears of contrition, and with all the marks of the most ardent love. The infidelity and the devotion of this princess formed a con-

trast no less striking than her pride and her meanness, her obstinacy, her caprices, and her inexhaustible patience. In her father's nocturnal parties, she rivalled the most finished atheists in impious raillery and blasphemous jests; and this scepticism she was not ashamed to acknowledge in the face of the world. She nevertheless frequently experienced the horrors of remorse. When disturbed by these unwelcome visitations of conscience, she would shut herself up for several days in the convent of Carmelites at Paris, and there, amid fasting, prayers, sighs, tears, and castigations, would vie in devotion with the most pious of the nuns. No sooner had these impressions subsided, than she would herself laugh at what she had done, and turn it into ridicule. Duclos judiciously observes, that such contradictions indicate a degree of mental derangement.*

The other daughters of the regent were not so extremely inconsistent in their humours and actions as the duchess de Berry, but they resembled her in immorality, and contempt of the public opinion. The

* *Duclos*, II. p. 10. "Ces disparates marquoient certainement un degré de folie."

princess de Valois was at no pains to conceal her attachment to the duke de Richelieu, either from the court or from her father, even after she was betrothed to the duke of Modena. She spent large sums to obtain admittance to her favoured lover in the Bastille, and declared to her father that she would not go to Italy, unless he liberated the duke de Richelieu. The regent was compelled to suffer his rival, who had robbed him of the hearts of two of his daughters, and had openly conspired against him, to escape with impunity.* The princess de Valois followed the advice and example of the grand-duchess of Florence. After she had borne her husband several children, she returned to France, because, as her fair adviser expressed herself, no other country was fit for French princesses, or, in other words, they could not lead such a dissolute life in any other court as in that of France. The licentious habits which they there imbibed, were the principal cause of the home-sickness, to which, as Duclos observes, all French princesses were subject.†

* *Richelieu*, II. p. 137. III. p. 169, 176.

† "My child," said the grand-duchess, at taking leave of the princess de Valois, "do, like me; have one or two

Of all the regent's daughters, none possessed such various talents, qualifications, and accomplishments, as the abbess de Chelles.* Previous to her attachment to Jansenism, she had not only her lovers at court, but likewise her female favourites among the nuns of her convent. This unnatural propensity she communicated to her sister, afterwards the wife of Louis I. of Spain, who formed a seraglio for herself from among the most beautiful ladies of the palace; and, after her return to her native country, gave, like her sisters, a free scope to all her passions.†

children, and then endeavour to come back to France. No other country is fit for us." All our princesses, adds Duelos, are actually subject to what is called home-sickness. The duchess of Modena accordingly returned as soon as she could.

* *Richelieu*, III. p. 237--8. "She might be said to be a musician, artist, embroideress, a skilful mantua-maker, milliner, and hair-dresser; a cabinet-maker, physician, chemist, apothecary, and surgeon, divine and Jansenist, being thoroughly acquainted with every part of that subtle heresy."

† *Richelieu*, IV. p. 23. III. p. 357. "Elle donna alors un libre essor à toutes ses passions, et se permit des divertissemens que sa sœur se permettoit dans l'abbaye de Chelles, s'attachant trop intimement à celles de ses Camoristes (dames d'honneur qui avoient le talent de lui plaire.)" The mother of the regent assures us, that she was informed by a person of veracity, that he had surprised Monsieur's first wife, Henrietta of England, in the indulgence of illicit pleasures with the princess of Monaco. *Anecdotes*, p. 293.

The other French princesses were either quite or nearly as dissolute as the daughters of the regent. The duchess du Maine solaced herself at Sceaux with the love of a great cardinal, and the duchess de Bourbon with that of Duchaila.* The elder princess of Condé yielded to the solicitations of her nephew, and the younger was enamoured of La Fare and the handsome Clermont. Of the sisters of the duke of Bourbon, the princess de Charolois gave the greatest scandal. She concerted, with her younger sister and the duchess de Berry, private meetings, to which their lovers assembled sometimes at the house of one, and sometimes at that of another of these three princesses.† The passion of the princess de Charolois for the duke de Richelieu was so strong, that she not only conceived the dangerous project of visiting her lover in the Bastille, but actually found means to put it twice in execution.‡ At the second interview, she entered into an engagement with the princess de Valois, to whom she had before borne all the hatred that jealousy can inspire, but to whom she now became re-

* *Richelieu*, II. p. 243.
† *Ibid.* II. p. 123.
‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 137. III. p. 169.

conciled, that through her means she might obtain a sight of her lover, and effect his deliverance. She promised her rival to cede the duke entirely to her, and never to see him again, if she would prevail upon her father to grant him his liberty and his life. The duke was followed by many other lovers.

The princess, who was pregnant almost every year, took no more pains to conceal it than an opera-dancer. Every time after her delivery, the court made inquiries after the health of the princess. To a question of this kind, a waggish porter once replied, "that the princess was as well as could be expected, and the child too."* All these irregularities of the younger princesses were pardonable, if we may believe the report of the scandalous chronicle respecting the mother of the regent, who is said to have lived in public with the handsome adventurer, Law, as his mistress.†

Among all the French princesses, there were only two whose characters were unimpeachable. These were, the consort of the regent, against whom the tongue

* *Vie privée de Louis XV.* T. I. p. 181.
† *Richelieu*, II. 242. III. 5.

of slander had nothing to alledge after her marriage, and particularly during the regency; and the countess de Toulouse,* the widow of M. de Gondrin, to whom the count was privately united. It does equal honour to the count and countess, that their marriage was deemed the happiest that had ever been seen in France.† The court of Rambouillet, where they generally resided, was a pattern of modest splendour, the seat of elegant and innocent pleasures, the refuge of true virtue and genuine piety, which were driven with disgrace from the court of the regent, and the means of preserving and restoring polite gallantry and the *bon ton* of social life. Here the young king acquired that genuine politeness which he displayed through life, and which was particularly admired during the administration of cardinal Fleury.‡ Besides the court of the

* *St. Simon*, VII. p. 30. *Richelieu*, IV. P. I. p. 10. P. II. p. 19, 21.

† *Richelieu*, as above. "Jamais on ne vit en France un mariage aussi heureux," &c.

‡ *Ibid.* "C'est dans cette cour, que Louis XV. vint apprendre les usages du monde, que se formerent ses habitudes sociales, les manieres polies et decentes, qu'il sut conserver le reste de sa vie; les principes de ce bon gout, et de la veritable galanterie, qu'on devoit admirer dans sa cour, pendant le ministere de Fleury."

count de Toulouse, very few distinguished houses remained uncontaminated with the immorality, indecency, and scepticism of the court of the regent. The hotels of the Luynes, the La Rochefaucaults, the Mortemars, the Sullys, the La Vallieres, the La Feuillades, and a few others, alone continued pure and untainted. The other princes, gentlemen, and ladies of the French court readily adopted the *ton* given by the regent and his infamous *Roués*. The count de Clermont, though not the most depraved of the princes, was the first that formed a regular seraglio at Paris: an example which was not long without followers.* The whole life of the cardinal Dubois, was as horrible as his death;† and he had associates worthy of himself in d'Argenson, minister of police, and afterwards of finances;‡ and Law,

* *Richelieu*, IV. P. II. p. 18. "To him the age was indebted for the first idea of a seraglio, which he filled with the most beautiful young females that could be found for several years at Paris.

† *St. Simon*, VIII. p. 162, &c. "Nothing was sacred with him; he respected no kind of tie or obligation; professed a contempt for good faith, honour, integrity, and truth, of which he made a mockery on all occasions. He was equally voluptuous and ambitious, accounting himself every thing, and all besides him nothing; and regarding it as the height of madness to think or act in any other way."

‡ Respecting the abominations of d'Argenson, see *Richelieu*, II. p. 276, and likewise III. p. 22.

the adventurer. The insensate Dubois gave audience to the most common strumpets, as if they had been princesses;* and, on the contrary, treated women the most distinguished for their rank and virtues as the most depraved of their sex. Madame de Cheverny having been appointed *gouvernante* to the regent's daughters, called, by particular recommendation of the duchess of Orleans to thank the cardinal. This lady had scarcely uttered the word *Monseigneur*, when the cardinal vociferated: *Oh! Monseigneur, Monseigneur, cela ne se peut pas.* In vain did the astonished lady strive to give the furious cardinal to understand, that she wanted nothing from him. At the second *Monseigneur* with which she addressed him, the cardinal interrupted her with the emphatic words: *De par tous les diables, quand je vous dis que cela ne se peut pas;* and at the third, he seized her by the shoulders, pushed her to the door, and giving her a violent thrust on the back, took leave of her with this compliment: *Allez à tous les diables, et me*

* *Richelieu*, III. p. 329. "Attending to the business of public prostitutes, and especially of kept women, whom he received at his audiences, together with women of character."

*laissez en repos.** The honours of his house were performed by La Tencin, whom I have several times already had occasion to mention; and who, when a nun, became pregnant by her brother, the abbé, and afterwards cardinal Tencin. After her flight from the convent, she had gradually raised herself by means of her numerous charms, her amours and intrigues, and at length filled one of the principal parts at the court of the regent, in the character of mistress to cardinal Dubois.† In this quality she invented the voluptuous scenes that were acted at the nocturnal entertainments of the regent, and made the house of the cardinal a seminary of seduction for young persons of both sexes.‡

The regent and his ministers were not the only persons on whom the ladies of the court forced themselves, with all the effrontery of prostitutes. Many of the courtiers were as much, or perhaps even

* *St. Simon*, VIII. p. 184, 5.

† *Richelieu*, III. p. 30, &c. *Duclos*, II. p. 43, 45.

‡ *Richelieu*, III. p. 20. "Il en fit comme de sa femme, et la présenta au Palais Royal. Elle s'établit aux depens de l'abbé, à la tête d'une maison, qui fut le rendez-vous de la grande compagnie parmi les jeunes gens spirituels et voluptueux."

more, followed by them than the regent. Among these happy mortals, the duke de Richelieu was particularly distinguished. Besides several princesses, he had connexions with a great number of other ladies.* His seraglio, as the editor of his Memoirs very justly observes, comprehended all the rank and beauty of the French court; and to such a degree of depravity had the women arrived, that they boasted in a manner of their love for this universal favourite.† He very often found, on his return home, ten or twelve love-letters at a time, in which the favour of his company was requested the following night. He did not give himself the trouble to read all these letters, some of which were written in cyphers. He opened only the billet of the fair female whom he wished to make happy, and put the rest, sealed as they were, into his drawers, where they were

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, II. p. 250. "Je faisois ma cour à une très grand nombre à la fois."

† *Ibid.* VI. p. 66. "La plupart de femmes, de cour en etoient venües à ce degré de corruption qu'elles se glorifioient, en quelque sorte de leur amour pour lui . . . Tout ce que les sultans peuvent réunir de beautés et de plaisirs dans un serail, et se les assujettir par la puissance, le duc de Richelieu le possedoit librement et sans jalousie au milieu de la cour."

viewed by Soulavie as so many monuments of the immorality of the court. The duke took delight in vexing the women who were attached to him, and in setting them together by the ears. When he wanted to get rid of one, he sent her designedly, but apparently by mistake, the love-letters that were intended for others. The duke had so little regard for women, that he once directed one of his friends and rivals to be shewn into his chamber, where he was in bed with a lady to whom both of them paid their addresses. She attempted to conceal herself beneath the clothes, but the duke even took off her mask, and exposed the blushing beauties of the confounded fair one to the view of the petrified spectator.* In his general conduct he followed this practice, which always succeeded to his wishes, to inspire those with whom he had connexions with a small degree of jealousy, to exasperate them against one another, and to afford them occasion to suspect him of inconstancy.

The duke de Richelieu was the cause of an unprecedented duel between two women, Madame de Polignac and Madame

* *Richelieu*, VI. p. 64, 65.

de Nesle, who disputed the possession of him. The duke had repeatedly refused to see the former, but this was of no avail. Madame de Polignac still loved her inconstant gallant with as much ardour as ever, and was therefore jealous of all the ladies who had succeeded her, not singly, but whole troops together.* Tortured by jealousy, she one day met Madame de Nesle, and challenged her to fight with pistols in the *Bois de Boulogne*. Madame de Nesle eagerly accepted the challenge, being animated by the same spirit as her fair antagonist, and, hoping either to kill her rival, and thus to remain in undisturbed possession of her lover, or to evince the strength of her attachment, and the ardour of her passion by an honourable death. The ladies met, and fired at each other. Madame de Nesle fell, and her fair bosom was covered with blood. "Come on," exclaimed her antagonist, "I will teach you the consequences of robbing a woman like me, of her lover. If I had the perfidious creature in my power I would tear out her heart, as I have blown out her

* *Richelieu*, VI. p. 251. "Jalouse de toutes les dames, qui lui avoient succedé en grand nombre, non à la file, mais à la fois et ensemble, elle s'en prit un jour à Madame de Nesle."

brains." A young man, who heard these cruel words, begged her to moderate herself, and not to exult over her unfortunate antagonist, whose courage, at least, could not but command her respect. "Silence, young coxcomb," cried Madame de Polignac, "it does not become you to presume to give me instruction." Madame de Nesle was not wounded in the breast, as had at first been feared, but very slightly in the shoulder. On coming to herself, some one asked her, whether the lover for whose sake she had fought, was worth her exposing herself to such a risk. "O yes," replied she, "he deserves much better blood to be shed for him than what circulates in my veins. He is the most amiable man of the whole court. All the ladies lay snares for him; but I hope, after this proof of love, which I have given, to obtain the exclusive possession of his heart. I am under too great obligations to you," continued she, "to conceal his name. It is the duke de Richelieu; yes, the duke de Richelieu, the first-born of the god of war, and the goddess of love."*

The great and general corruption of

* The best character is given of this courtier by *Duclos*, II. p. 33.

manners among the ladies of the court, was more strikingly displayed on the formation of the household of the young queen, than on any other occasion. The then bishop Fleury recommended the utmost care in the selection of the females who were to compose it, that the young and innocent queen might not be put to the blush by the sight of the shameless women of the regency, or corrupted by their society. A *Dame d'honneur* was first sought for the future queen, and among the ladies whose rank might have laid claim to that situation, not one of unimpeachable character was to be found, except the duchess de St. Simon.* From jealousy, however, of the spirit and principles of her husband, the preference was given to the marechale de Boufflers, whose reputation was far from being immaculate, and who, therefore, gave occasion to this reflection, that her appointment shewed the depth of the depravity into which the sex had sunk during the regency of the duke of Orleans.† The countess de Mailly, who was afterwards the first mis-

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 48.

† *Ibid.* . . " d'où l'on peut inférer à quelle corruption s'etoit livré le sexe; combien la regence avoit favorisé le libertinage scandaleux."

tress of Louis XV. was nominated *Dame d'atour*. With respect to the twelve *dames du palais*, they were less difficult in the choice, as it would scarcely have been possible to find the requisite number, had untainted purity of manners been insisted upon as an indispensable qualification.*

During the reign of Louis XIV. it had already been thought ridiculous for man and wife to entertain a sincere affection for each other, and still more if they acknowledged it, and appeared together in public companies. During the regency of the duke of Orleans, by a refinement upon this notion, it was declared inconceivably stupid and vulgar in married people of quality not to allow each other perfect liberty to live as they pleased.† This way of thinking extended from the court over the rest of France,‡ and was even communicated, like other French vices, to

* Car il eut été trop difficile, dit avec raison Massillon dans ses memoires, d'en remplir les places des femmes intactes du coté des moeurs, si on avoit été bien scrupuleux.

† *Richelieu*, II. p. 121. "Peu à peu s'introduisit en France cette funeste maxime, que les femmes devoient fermer les yeux sur les égaremens de leurs maris, obligés d'avoir les mêmes attentions pour leurs femmes; et bientôt parmi les grands seigneurs on regarde à la cour comme une folie inconcevable de se conduire *bourgeoisement*."

‡ . . . "ces principes passoient de la cour du regent dans le reste de la France."

foreign courts.* An intelligent historian and observer, was of opinion, that the only good which could be said of the court of the regent was this, that theft and swindling, which afterwards ascended to the highest ranks, were regarded as low and contemptible crimes.† It will be recollected, that, even as early as the reign of Louis XIV. many of the courtiers began to practise these vulgar vices.

Duclos and other moralists and historians were right, when they asserted, that Law's system did much more mischief by its influence on public morals, than by the accumulation of the debts of the state, and the ruin of many thousand families; that by this system, avarice had been awakened in the higher orders, nobleness of sentiments destroyed, and honour sacrificed to wealth, much more than at any former period; but they were mistaken, when they imagined that this pernicious

* "Ainsi les cours etrangeres se mettoient à l'unisson, et venoient imiter en France celle du régent, dont les fêtes libres etoient un jeu perpetuel du ceremonial et de l'étiquette qui contrarioient les plaisirs et les divertissemens."

† Soulavie, in the *Mém. de Richelieu* . . . "excepté ceux que les seigneurs de ce temps-là appeloient encore des bassesses tels que le vol, l'escroquerie, et les autres semblables delits populaires, que nous avons vu dans la suite monter dans les rangs."

system was the first cause of their debasement and depravity, and that the nobility, who were still ready to sacrifice their lives to their honour, then began, without scruple, to sacrifice honour to fortune.* Had the nobles and military men been animated in the preceding century by honour alone; had the magistrate aspired only to respect, the man of letters to reputation, and the ecclesiastic to virtue, or at least to the appearance of virtue; had, finally, the merchant prided himself in his fortune, merely because it was a proof of his industry, his regularity and his abilities:† neither the example of the regent, nor the system of Law would have produced so sudden and so total a revolution in morals as they have ascribed to it. Law's system certainly encouraged that

* *Duclos*, II. p. 72. "Cette noblesse qui sacrifie si gaiement sa vie à son honneur immoloit sans scrupule son honneur à sa fortune. Si la regence est une des époques de la dépravation des mœurs, le système en est une encore plus marquée de l'avilissement des ames."

† *Ibid.* II. p. 135. "Dans le siècle precedent la noblesse et le militaire n'etoient animés que par l'honneur; le magistrat cherchoit la consideration; l'homme de lettres, l'homme à talent ambitionnoit la reputation; le commerçant se glorifioit de sa fortune, parcequ'elle etoit une preuve d'intelligence, de vigilance, de travail et d'ordre. Les ecclesiastiques qui n'etoient pas vertueux, étoient du moins forcés de le paroitre. Toutes les classes de l'état n'ont aujourdhui qu'un objet, c'est d'être riche sans que qui ce soit fixe les bornes de la fortune où il pretend."

thirst of wealth which before existed, and powerfully contributed to strengthen the notion, that riches are the supreme earthly good; that to their acquirement all other considerations should be sacrificed; and that for their sake, the greatest evils and humiliations should be endured. When, in 1718, the royal bank was established and the king was declard the general banker of the whole nation; princes, dukes, and other titled men felt no scruple to turn bankers and brokers.* The more the rage for stock-jobbing increased, so much the more sudden were the revolutions of fortune. Numbers who were before rich, were, in a short time, reduced to beggary; and worthless domestics, or other low-bred people gained such sums as enabled them to vie with gentlemen of the greatest fortune and of the higest rank.† The most fortunate stock-jobbers, in a few years, amassed such immense wealth as had never yet been seen in the hands of private persons; and these overgrown favourites of fortune, naturally inflamed the cupidity

* *Vie privée de Louis XV.* T. I. p. 59, &c.

† *Ibid.* T. I. p. 67. where the most interesting anecdotes of the sudden vicissitudes of fortune at that time, are to be found.

of all ranks to the highest pitch.* Never were honours so great paid to any king of France, much less to any minister, as to the creator and director of the delusive paper riches, the comptroller-general Law. Duchesses kissed his hands, and the dowager duchess of Orleans was of opinion, that if he had desired it, the ladies would not have hesitated to kiss his posteriors.† One day when he was giving audience, having a pressing call of nature, he was going to leave the apartment. The ladies that were present, begged him not to withdraw, when he candidly told them the reason which obliged him to retire. *Monseigneur*, cried they, *si vous n'avez d'autre besoin que celui de p----r, ne vous allez pas ; p----z ici et ecoutez nous.*‡ The avaricious fair would not take any denial, even when he flatly and repeatedly refused their favours. One lady ordered her coachman to overturn her before Law's hotel, hoping that fortune would befriend her, and procure her an opportunity of speaking with the otherwise invisible comptroller;

* *Vie privée de Louis XV.* T. I. p. 76. A Madame Chaumont, from the Netherlands, accumulated a fortune of 127 millions (upwards of five millions sterling.)

† *Anecdotes*, p. 368.

‡ *Ibid.* and *Richelieu*, III. p. 35.

and in this hope she was not disappointed. Another cried out *Fire! Fire!* before a house, where she knew that Law was at dinner. On hearing the alarm, Law made his appearance, on which she seized the opportunity to communicate her business, but the minister eluded her solicitations by a speedy flight.* Duchesses and other titled ladies did not scruple to give Law's wife and daughter the place of honour in their coaches; and their husbands even rallied them on being obliged to wait like lacquies, for a whole day together, in the antichamber of the minister. Duclos very judiciously observes, that pleasantry in such cases, is a sure sign of incurable depravity.† From Law's time, the stigma which had previously attached to the finances and financial employments was removed. Members of parliament entered into the financial department, and the lowest places, which had formerly been given as a reward to domestics, now grew into such request, that more nobles than commoners were to be found in them.‡

* *Anecdotes*, p. 369.

† *Duclos*, II. p. 72. "Mais le ton plaisant deja usé, est en cette matière le dernier symptôme de l'incurabilité."

‡ *Ibid.* II. p. 135, 136.

To the few beneficial regulations of the regent belonged the total prohibition of games of chance. The duke de Tremes, as governor of Paris, claimed the right of keeping a privileged gaming-house. This assumed right the regent purchased of him with a pension of two thousand livres. A few years afterwards, the devout princess de Carignan smuggled the privilege of establishing a Pharo-bank, in her *Hotel de Soissons*. The duke de Tremes follow-her example, still, however, retaining his pension of two thousand livres. Many tragic occurrences convinced cardinal Fleury that the gaming-houses were seminaries of the *Place de le Grève*, the place of execution at Paris, and he again prohibited games of hazard. Nevertheless, the governors of many provinces still regarded this licencing of Pharo-banks as one of the prerogatives of their office.*

Though scarcely any man, possessing so many natural endowments, was so soft and so little proof against the wiles of seduction as the duke of Orleans; he was, nevertheless, as close and reserved with respect to affairs of state, as the most discreet and independent men can possibly be.

* *Duclos*, II. p. 3, 4.

Neither his mistresses, nor the duchess of Berry, still less the other *Roués* could ever obtain from him the least information concerning public affairs, which the regent had occasion to keep secret.* As the duke never suffered any thing to escape him, or to be drawn from him when intoxicated with wine, so also, women had very little power over him ;† and it may justly be doubted, whether Madame d'Orleans, the duchess of Berry, and their confidante, Madame de Mausy, had any great share in the fall of the marshal de Noailles, as it is asserted in the memoirs of the duke de Richelieu.‡

Immediately after the death of the regent, women again began to govern with more absolute sway than the sex had ever enjoyed, except during the reign of Louis

* *St. Simon*, VII. p. 94. " Et ce qui est fort extraordinaire, c'est que ni ses maitresses, ni la duchesse de Berry, ni ses Roués, au milieu de l'ivresse n'ont jamais pu savoir de lui rien d'un peu important sur quoi que ce soit de l'état." If we may believe the *Mémoires de Richelieu*, his daughter Mademoiselle de Valois, was unable to extort from him the secret of the stranger with the iron mask, except at the price of the last favour.

† *Ibid.* p. 95. " Toutes ces maitresses avoient en même temps leur cour. Elles pouvoient peu de chose, n'avoient pas de part au secret des affaires, et tiroient mediocrement de l'argent."

‡ I. p. 260.

XIV. The duke de Bourbon, the prime minister, was so bewitched by his mistress, the marquise de Prie, that he suffered himself to be guided by her and her friends, the brothers of the name of Paris, in all matters, whether momentous or unimportant.* The most odious passions, ambition, avarice, hatred, revenge, and the thirst of power, raged with equal violence, and, at the same time, in the bosom of this dangerous woman. Impelled by these impetuous passions, she carried through all her plans without forbearance, and by force.† At the moment when her lover was elevated to the post of prime minister,‡ all the other ministers became her servants, or her secretaries. To gratify her passions, she spared neither

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 5. "Madame de Prie eut celui (l'art) d'ensorceler Monsieur le duc dans toute la force du terme." See also *Duclos*, II. p. 291.

† *St. Simon*, VIII. p. 197. "Madame Prie etoit un prodige de l'excès des plus funestes passions. L'ambition, l'avarice, la haine, la vengeance, la domination la tourmentèrent: elle alla surtout sans ménagement, sans mesure, sans vouloir souffrir la moindre contradiction." When the duke de Bourbon once put into her hands a forcible remonstrance of the states of Bretagne, she made a motion as if to apply it to a use the most degrading, and actually directed it to be put aside for that purpose. *Richelieu*, IV. p. 100.

‡ *Ibid.* IV. p. 7.

lettres de cachet, exile, nor false accusations; and her friends could say nothing in her praise, except that she had never had recourse to poison, or assassination.* She deceived her fascinated admirer in love as well as in affairs of state. Having once communicated to him a disgraceful disease, she persuaded him that it was he who had infected her.† At a great promotion of knights of the order *du Saint Esprit*, she obtained this honour for several candidates, merely for the sake of those talents, with which she had found private opportunities to become acquainted.‡ None of the ladies of the court was better able than she to prepare the young queen, whom she went to Strasburg to meet, for the approaching wedding-night. The youthful monarch was so ignorant and so modest, that it was thought necessary to give him a complete course of instruction in the operations of love. This course consisted of a series of the finest

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 147. "Elle avoit l'addresse d'employer des lettres de cachet, l'exil, l'emprisonnement, et quelquefois même les voies juridiques, pour perdre ceux qui avoient le malheur de lui déplaire; et ses partisans ne pouvoient dire autre bien d'elle, sinon qu'elle n'avoit jamais ordonné des empoisonnemens ni des assassinats."

† *Ibid.* IV. p. 147, 148.

‡ *Ibid.*

pictures, in which was represented, the progress of love, from the first innocent caresses till the moment of the highest enjoyment. To render them still more intelligible, a commentary of the most obscence works of sculpture was annexed, that the pupil might not only see, but likewise feel what he was now to practise.* After the fall of the duke de Bourbon, Madame de Prie was separated from her lover, and exiled to a distant province. This disgrace was too severe a shock for the imperious mistress. She died in a few months of the same disease which carried off most disgraced French ministers, and was therefore denominated *maladie de ministres.*† For the rest, the marquise de Prie was one of the few ladies belonging to the court during the regency, who distinguished themselves by more than ordinary acquirements.‡ The princess de Charolois, though she was inferior in

* *Richelieu,* IV. p. 52.

† "Ces distinctions," says Duclos, treating of d'Argenson, II. p. 110. "ne le preserverent pas de la maladie de ministre disgracié espèce de *spleen,* qui les saisit presque tous, et dont la plupart perissent."

‡ *St. Simon,* VIII. "Madame de Prie, qui, avec de la beauté l'air, la taille de nymphe, beaucoup d'esprit, et ayant pour son age et son etat de la lecture et des connoissances."

talents and attainments to the abbess de Chelles, was extremely happy in the composition of gay and burlesque songs, many hundreds of which, written on the events of the day, were circulated in the city and at court.* By her delicate and lively wit, this same princess was one of the principal ornaments of the court of Rambouillet, though she had not the peculiar *ton*, which the wife of the regent had acquired in the society of Madame de Montespan.† Delicate gallantry and genuine politeness were still more rare among the French ladies at the era of the regency, than distinguished literary and intellectual attainments.

* *Mém. de Richelieu,* IV. P. II. p. 25.

† *St. Simon,* VII. p. 30. . . "a singularity in the choice of expressions which was free from affectation, and never failed to surprise, together with that turn peculiar to Madame de Montespan and her sisters, and which was confined to those persons who had enjoyed her familiarity, or whom she had brought up."

CHAPTER XI.

Of the State of the Female Sex during the Reign of Louis XV.

During the reign of Louis XV. the abuse of the royal authority, the negligence and licentiousness of the sovereign, the profligacy and meanness of the courtiers, the profusion and insolence of the ministers and mistresses, and the poverty and discontent of the people arrived at such a pitch, that the monarchy was shaken by them to its very foundations. Louis XV. was far inferior to the regent in abilities, natural and acquired, and was neither more active nor more independent:* it

* The character which Soulavie gives of all the princes of the house of Bourbon, is more applicable to Louis XV. than to any other. "C'est donc," says he, "cette faculté de l'ame qu'on appelle la volonté, qui a manqué aux princes de la maison de Bourbon." This monarch without will was, like all other persons of that description, sometimes invincibly obstinate, and almost always in things of a mischievous tendency: for instance, the sup-

was therefore impossible for him to retain the reins of government in his own hands. If princes so ignorant, so weak, and so indolent as Louis XV.* meet with a director so good, not to say less irreproachable, than cardinal Fleury; this is a circumstance purely accidental, which there is no reason to expect, and which, according to the course of nature, cannot be of any long duration. Princes of the character I have described must always fall a prey to bad men, who flatter their darling passions, or if their evil propensities are yet dormant, employ every possible expedient to rouze them, and then seek, by means of these propensities, to enslave the illustrious captives. Had cardinal Fleury's life been prolonged, he would most certainly have been driven from the helm in the same manner as, long before his death, he had been deprived of the sole influence over the mind of the king.

pression of the parliaments, and the public exhibition of Dubarry. *Hist. privee*, IV. p. 160. "This was perhaps the only occasion on which, opposing all difficulties, he shewed a firmness and persevcrance, of which he was destitute in the most important affairs."

* Respecting the neglect of his education, see *Richelieu*, III. p. 339, &c. He had acquired some knowledge of the etiquette of the court, and the contents of the Prayer-book.

After the decease of the cardinal, the king sunk in the same proportion as his ministers and mistresses grew worse and worse, till at length he became as debauched as the most profligate of mankind could make him. The reign of Louis XV. was divided into three epochs; the golden age, or the period of the administration of cardinal Fleury; the silver age, while Pompadour was in power; and the iron age, comprehending the government of du Barri, and the unprincipled wretches, who, in conjunction with that mistress, accomplished the ruin both of the monarch and of the kingdom.

Cardinal Fleury treated the French monarchy like a patient in a very dangerous disease, whose health cannot be restored, or his life prolonged, but by slow and gentle remedies. During his economical and peaceful administration, commerce, manufactures, and public credit again flourished; and they would have been still more flourishing, had not the kingdom, from the year 1740, been involved in sanguinary wars, when the pacific virtues of the cardinal degenerated into fatal foibles. It required still more trouble to instigate the devout and innocent monarch to vicious gratifications;

than to excite his director and minister to war. Louis XV. was one of the most comely men of his nation;* and it was known that he was never passionately attached to the queen: it was therefore not surprising that the most beautiful females endeavoured to attract his notice. All these temptations were, for years together, as ineffectual as the persuasions of the courtiers. When it was observed to the innocent monarch that any particular lady was remarkably beautiful, he would coldly reply: "She is not so handsome as the queen."† This princess had, unfortunately, such a propensity to over-rigid devotion, and this propensity was cherished to such a degree by her confessor, who was bribed for the purpose, that she often scrupled to permit the embraces of her consort. On one occasion, in particular, when the king was rather intoxicated, she repulsed him so rudely, that he swore not to expose himself to a repetition of the affront. The whole court was aware that the insulted and irritated monarch would not be long before he chose another partner of his bed; and that it was not a

* *Richelieu*, IV. P. II. p. 7, 13, &c.
† *Vie privée*, II. p. 27.

matter of indifference, either to the kingdom at large, or to those persons who had hitherto guided the king, on what female he should fix his affections. Several princesses* consulted together on the subject, with the privity of cardinal Fleury, and the assistance of the duke de Richelieu, and concluded that the countess de Mailly would be the fittest, or, at any rate, the least dangerous person. The countess was neither young† nor beautiful, but she was accomplished, interesting, and gentle, free from avarice, ambition, and the love of power. The duke de Richelieu, who was almost as bold and successful in the character of a pimp as in that of a lover, undertook to persuade the king to a private interview with the chosen lady. The interview took place, but was not attended with the consequences that were expected. The king, at that time in his twenty-fourth year, was so shy, that he durst not even venture to take the first steps to facilitate the ap-

* Among these were the immoral, I had almost said infamous, princess of Conti; the princess de Carignan, the favourite of cardinal Fleury; and even the virtuous countess de Toulouse.

† In 1732, when she became the mistress of the king, she was thirty-five years old.

proaches of the willing fair-one. After the failure of this first experiment, it required considerable trouble to bring the bashful monarch and the nettled lady to a second *tête-a-tête*. That this second attempt might not miscarry like the former, the countess was instructed to treat the king like a novice, and to proceed to extremities, in order to inspire him with courage, and to inflame his appetite. The countess obeyed, and with such success, that he went farther than had been expected. The first illicit enjoyment put an end to his bashfulness, and for ever silenced those scruples which had till then confined him to his consort, who was not very amiable, and to whom he was not very warmly attached.*

If it was absolutely necessary for Louis XV. to have a mistress, it would have been well if he had adhered to the countess de Mailly. This lady was as pas-

* *Vie privée*, II. p. 30. "Après les agaceries préliminaires, elle se permit les moyens extrêmes des courtisannes les plus devergondées. Ses attouchemens furent un talisman si heureux que l'amant si livra à des emportemens d'autant plus violens Madame de Mailly se presentant à ses instigateurs, ne leur dit autre chose sinon : Voyez de grace comme ce paillard m'a accommodée. Le premier pas fait, le roi ne sentit plus rien qui l'inquietât ; il se livra sans remords à ce double adultere.

sionately fond of Louis XV. as La Valliere had been of his predecessor. She applied for no titles, places, or emoluments, either for herself or for her relations.* She quitted the court as poor, or even poorer, than when she came to it; loaded with debts which, without any profusion, she was obliged to contract, and which her royal lover long hesitated to pay. Upon the whole, Louis treated this his first mistress, after she had lost his favour, in the most cruel and ungenerous manner; in a manner, which evinced that his heart was even worse than his head.† The countess de Mailly expiated her faults, not only by the rigid austerities and penance which she imposed on herself, but also by the exemplary propriety of conduct in which she continued till her death.

The greatest enemies of her peace were her three sisters, Madame de Vintimille, Madame la Tournelle, afterwards duchess de Chateauroux, and Mademoiselle de Montcarvel, afterwards duchess de Lauraguais.‡ Madame de Vintimille was the

* *Vie privée*, p. 32.

† *Richelieu*, VI. p. 84, 85, 116, 117.

‡ *Hist. privée*, II. p. 33. *Richelieu*, VI. p. 57--59, 74, 84, 113, &c.

first that estranged the king's heart from Madame de Mailly. Madame de Vintimille gave birth to the count du Luc, who, on account of his resemblance to his father, was called *le demi-Louis*; and, after her death, the third sister stepped into the place of her two predecessors. At the same time that Madame la Tournelle obliged the countess de Mailly to quit the court, she contributed to the exaltation of her younger sister, Mademoiselle de Montcarvel. She had no objection to the king's connexion with the latter; and with all her influence promoted her marriage with the duke de Lauraguais, that she might herself be created duchess de Chateauroux. The duke de Richelieu performed the same office for the three other sisters as he had done for the countess de Mailly. He was the conductor and the adviser of the mistresses, and at the same time the confidant of the king, on whom he conferred a particular obligation, by estranging Madame la Tournelle, who was enamoured of the handsome duke d'Agenois, by every kind of low intrigue from that nobleman, and rendering her favourably disposed towards the king.* It was he who persuaded the du-

* *Richelieu*, VI. p. 73, 74

chess de Chateauroux and her sister, Lauraguais, to follow the king, contrary to his wish, to the camp, lest the passion of the monarch should cool, and the adversaries of his mistresses should gain the ascendancy.* It was he who, during the king's illness at Metz, persuaded the two sisters to remain as long as possible with the expiring monarch; and when they were at length expelled with equal solemnity and disgrace, found means not long afterwards to bring the lover, who, contrary to expectation, had recovered, and his irritated mistresses together again. It was not his fault that Madame de Flavacourt, the fifth daughter of the house of Mailly, was not sacrificed to the appetite of the king. Unmoved by the eloquence of the duke de Richelieu, this virtuous lady rejected all his proposals, declaring, that she preferred the esteem of her contemporaries to the favour of the monarch.†

Madame de Chateauroux survived but a short time her triumph over her enemies, and her reinstatement in the favour and

* *Richelieu*, VII. 13.

† *Ibid.* p. 85. "Voila donc tout Monsieur de Richelieu... Eh bien je prefere l'estime de mes contemporains."

affections of the king. Anxiety, grief, repressed indignation, revenge, the immoderate enjoyment of the pleasures of love at unseasonable times, brought on a fatal disorder, which terminated her life in a few days. She was neither more avaricious nor more prodigal than the countess de Mailly; and if she had more ambition, still she abhorred all low and dishonourable means of obtaining influence, or of securing the king's love. All France was indebted to her for rouzing the monarch from his lethargy, and encouraging him to place himself at the head of his troops, that he might render himself worthy not only of the love of his people, but also of his noble-minded mistress.* One of the most rigid judges of princes, and of the favourites of princes, regards her death, and that of cardinal Fleury, as the epoch when France ceased to have a good government, and when the character of the king and the state of the

* *Richelieu*, VII. p. 78, 79. "Elle n'a presque rien coûté a la nation, qui lui doit d'avoir reveillé le roi de sa lethargie, et de l'avoir mis à la tête de ses troupes. Elle conserva la dignité, la probité, et les principes de la maison de Mailly; dedaignant les bassesses et les moyens malhonnêtes de se conserver la faveur du roi."

nation began to grow gradually worse and worse.*

Cardinal Fleury had himself contributed to lead the king from the path of virtue. After the first deviation, it soon appeared that its authors had it not in their power to check his career when they pleased. Louis in a very short time quitted the countess de Mailly for Madame de Vintimille, and passed as quickly from her embraces into the arms of Madame la Tournelle. Cardinal Fleury and the count de Maurepas employed every possible expedient to alienate his affections from the latter. They at length circulated satirical songs and fictitious letters, containing severe animadversions on the conduct of the king, and which were pretended to have been intercepted by the post. In one of these letters was the following passage:—"The king is less beloved than he was. The removal of the countess de Mailly is loudly condemned, and the third mistress is as little esteemed as the

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, I. p. 477. "Ce prince, pour bien ou mal gouverner, vouloit être dominé; et tant qu'il le fut par Fleury ou Madame de Chateauroux, qui avoit l'ame elevée, du courage et des lumières, la France fut bien gouvernée. Depuis la mort de Madame de Chateauroux, les affaires allérent toujours en declinant."

second. If the king goes on in this way, he will soon become universally despised." After the king had read it, he said, with the utmost composure: *Eh bien ! je m'en f*——. The poetical satires made no more impression than the gradual retirement of the cardinal from business. The king persisted in the career into which he had once been led.* The cardinal was the first who withdrew the young monarch from public view, and who conducted him into the solitude of Versailles, that he might exclusively govern him with the greater ease.† After Louis XV. began to take delight in the society of his mistresses, it became irksome to him to be surrounded by his whole court, and he therefore stole from Versailles to Choisy, were he had none about him but his mistresses and his confidants. Hence arose the *petits appartemens*, as they were denominated, and the *soupers divins*, which more and more resembled the orgies of the regent.‡ Hence also arose by degrees

* *Richelieu*, VI. p. 97.

† *Duclos*, II. p. 217.

‡ *Vie privée*, II. p. 34, &c. "C'etoient elles, (Mademoiselle de Charolois, et la comtesse de Toulouse) qui avoient imaginé ces soupers divins, qu'on faisoit dans des reduits delicieux, accessibles aux seuls confidans, et designés par cette raison sous les noms des petits appartemens."

the *rounds*, or visits, which he paid every morning to the ladies in their private apartments.*

It was the kings of France who first collected, and who first corrupted, their court. When the latter had arrived at a certain degree of depravity, it infected the most innocent kings or queens with the increasing virulence of the contagion of its vices. The temptations prepared for the sovereigns were so irresistibly alluring, that a more than human force would almost have been required to withstand them with success. Men of the highest rank, and the most illustrious females, deemed themselves happy if they could gratify the passions of the monarchs, and the caprices of their ministers and mistresses. When the duchess de Chateauroux and her sister went privately after the king to the camp, three princesses, and the duchess de Chartres, so far forgot themselves as to accompany the two mistresses of the king. The public was in-

* *Richelieu*, VI. p. 113. "Such was the life of the little court of Choisy. The king, who frequently kept out of the way the husbands of the ladies that were invited, every morning took his *round*, as it was called, going and conversing with each lady in private, thus concealing his gallantries from his favourite, from the other ladies, and from their husbands."

dulgent enough to the rank of the princesses not to mention them by name, but manifested its indignation by giving them the surname of *les coureuses* (the runners).* It is impossible to conceive any thing more abject than the servile assiduity with which the whole court cringed before the squalid confessors, and the proud valet of cardinal Fleury. The equipages of princes and princesses, and of the other gentlemen and ladies belonging to the court, at first blocked up the Rue St. Victor, where Polet, the cardinal's confessor, resided; and afterwards crowded the spacious court of St. Sulpice, when the minister had chosen a confessor out of that seminary. Petitioners were not only obliged to relinquish all the prerogatives of birth and rank, but to submit to an examination of their orthodoxy, if they were desirous of obtaining bishoprics, prebends, or pensions for themselves or their friends.† No person belonging to the court was ashamed to pay the same attentions to the cardinal's valet as to his equal.‡ Barjac expected dukes and other

* *Richelieu*, VII. p. 13.
† *Ibid.* IV. p. 44, &c. p. 183, 184.
‡ *Ibid.* p. 49, &c.

people of rank to treat him like a man who enjoyed a share in the management of public affairs, and who had it in his power to make or to ruin the fortunes of the most illustrious. The cardinal was pleased to see his confidant adopt this tone; and when his table was full, he would sometimes say to some of the courtiers: *Allez donc diner chez Barjac.* Great as was the consequence assumed by Barjac, it was far surpassed by the servility of the courtiers; and this servility offended Barjac more than neglect. A man of quality one day solicited a favour, respecting a matter of great importance to him, of the cardinal's valet, and in his request went far beyond the limits of delicacy, which Barjac wished every one to observe. The courtier descanted on the virtues and talents of Monsieur de Barjac, to whom he ascribed the prosperity of France, humbly begged to be allowed the honour of dining with M. de Barjac, and placed himself in the most familiar manner by his side. This abject meanness so disgusted the intelligent Barjac, who, with all his importance, never forgot his condition, that he rose from table, and taking a napkin under his arm, and a plate in his hand, placed himself behind the chair of his

titled guest. The latter declared, that he would never consent to be waited on in that manner by Barjac; on which the latter replied, that he would not procure the accomplishment of his wish on any other terms; adding, that if a peer of France, with a view to please Barjac, forgot what he was, he (Barjac) ought at least not to forget himself. The king, the cardinal, and the whole court laughed at the severe lesson which Barjac had given; and the courtiers learned that they might fawn and cringe, but that it was necessary to keep within certain bounds in both.

The death of the duchess de Chateauroux plunged the king into a profound melancholy, which was a malady inherent in his constitution. All the fair ladies of the court strove to soothe the afflicted monarch. All the ambitious women secretly set every engine to work, to throw a new mistress in the way of the king; nay, even the whole nation, or at least the capital, deemed it incumbent upon it, to revive the dejected monarch, and to rekindle the flames of love in his cheerless heart. With this view, not only the ladies of the court, but all the beauties of the capital were invited to the magnificent entertainment given in 1745, by the

city of Paris, upon the marriage of the dauphin.* The sight of so many beautiful females served not only to dissipate the king's despondency, but to awaken his dormant passions. The charming Madame Normand d'Etioles, afterwards marquise de Pompadour, at length succeeded, at this entertainment, in captivating the eyes and heart of the monarch, to which she had long aspired, for which she had been educated by her mother, and for which Madame de Tencin, the cardinal of the same name, and Binet, the dauphin's valet, who were relatives of Madame d'Etioles, had long destined and prepared her.† Notwithstanding all her charms and her talents, which had been cultivated in the society of Fontenelle, Voltaire and other *beaux-esprits,* Madame d'Etioles had occasion for such advisers and supporters, not only to gain the notice of the monarch, but to secure the possession of his heart. The monarch received so little gratification from the first enjoyment, that he would probably have abandoned Madame d'Etioles immediately, had not Binet, by whom she was intro-

* *Vie privee de Louis XV.* II. p. 216, &c.

† *Ibid.* as above. *Richelieu,* VIII. p. 149, &c.

duced to him, represented to the king, that the lady had conceived the strongest passion for his person, and that, without his favour and protection, she would certainly die of disappointed love, and fear of the vengeance of an irritated husband. This picture of her passion, and of her distress, moved the king. The second interview gave him such satisfaction, that in the Easter week he publicly acknowledged Madame d'Etioles as his mistress.* Even after this her situation was by no means secure. The parties of the queen, the dauphin, the minister Maurepas, and many other envious persons of both sexes, combined against her. They scoffed at her low birth, on account of which, they never called her by any other name than *la grisette*, or *la petite bourgeoise*. They ridiculed her low or uncourtly manners, language, and tone of voice, which appeared disagreeable to the king himself, and which she never was able to lay aside.† Nevertheless, with the assistance of her friends, she maintained her ground against all the attacks of her adversaries. By the happy talent she possessed for entertaining

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, VIII. p. 154, &c.

† *Ibid.* I. p. 84.

the king, who never loved her with passion, she rendered herself daily more necessary to him, and enslaved the weak prince by a peculiar boldness of resolution and firmness of character.* Her authority over the king, and her victory over those by whom she was hated and envied, were signally displayed on the 14th of September 1745, when she was presented with the usual ceremonies to the king, the queen, and the dauphin.† No sooner was this presentation determined upon, than all crowded around to pay their respects, or cringed before her. The new mistress was introduced to the court by the no less prodigal and necessitous than immoral princess of Conti. ‡ On the day of presentation, the gentlemen and ladies of the court thronged in such numbers to the palace, that all the apartments were filled.§ The king blushed at their servility. How should the abject courtiers have been ashamed, or how could they have omitted an opportunity of

* *Richelieu*, VIII. p. 167.

† *Ibid.*-VII. p. 205. VIII. p. 52, 162, 163.

‡ *Ibid.* VII. p. 52.

§ *Ibid.* VIII. p. 163. "Des courtisans vils et rampans, devoués à la servitude, remplirent ce jour-la tous les apartemens et jusqu'au cabinet. Le roi en rougit, la grisette en soutint avec effronterie le scandale."

evincing their submission to the all-powerful mistress herself, when they did not scruple to pay almost divine honours to her brother, a boy who had scarcely left school, and insisted on rendering him the services of lacqueys. Whenever he appeared at Versailles, a crowd of people of the highest rank instantly collected round him, and he observed, with great simplicity, that if he chanced to drop his handkerchief, a dozen knights of the blue ribbon immediately stooped to contest the honour of picking it up.* Some days after the presentation, the virtuous, pious, and patient queen, degraded herself so low as to dine with the mistress of her husband; and after this example was set by her majesty, her ladies no longer scrupled to associate with the *grisette*, to whom they had at first shewn a hostile disposition.† The spirited *grisette* began at the very commencement of her favour, to take pattern from Madame de Maintenon, and to observe, as nearly as possible, the same etiquette, as the private consort of Louis XIV. had introduced. Accordingly she never admitted the princes or

* *Hist. privée*, II. p. 345.

† *Richelieu*, VIII. p. 164.

princesses to her presence, except when they requested audiences, or when she sent for them to give them reprimands. In both cases, they, as well as the other gentlemen and ladies of the court were obliged to stand before the mistress of the king, who kept her seat. Except the prince of Conti and the dauphin, all the other princes submitted to the impertinence of the haughty favourite.* This servility was worthy of most of the princes and princesses of the blood, who vied with each other in corrupting the morals of the nation,† and in giving the greatest scandal both in words and deeds.‡

* *Richelieu*, VIII. p. 162. "Madame de Pompadour se permit toutes les impertinences possibles auprès des princes du sang. Ils s'y soumettent presque tous avec bassesse, excepté," &c.

† *Ibid.* p. 84. "Tous les princes affectoient alors de scandaliser le peuple par leur libertinage; et presque tous ont été les plus audacieux corrupteurs de la nation."

‡ Among the females who gave the greatest offence, was the duchess de Chartress, afterwards duchess of Orleans. This princess attended the funeral of the first dauphin. Tired of the slow pace of the procession and the gloomy air of the whole solemnity, she interrupted the profound silence by the following observation to the bishop of Meaux, who carried the heart of the deceased prince: "*Monsieur l'Eveque*," said she, "somebody was saying this morning, that you have not yet lost your virginity." The mourning-coach was filled with ladies and ecclesiastics, who could not forbear bursting into a loud laugh. *Richelieu*, VIII. p. 63.

From the first appearance of Madame d'Etioles, two great parties were formed at court; that of the devotees, at the head of which was the dauphin, and that of the politicians, under the direction of the mistress and her confidants.* If the first gave considerable trouble to the second, still the latter always maintained the ascendancy. Madame de Pompadour soon found that Orri, the minister of finance, who enjoyed universal esteem, was much too honest to comply with all her wishes and demands. She effected his disgrace, and Orri fell amid the regrets of the king, and the sighs of the people. The mistress who had caused the removal of Orri, could not prevent the appointment of Machault, whom he had recommended as his successor;† but Machault was, in the sequel, dismissed like Maurepas, and all the other ministers, who would not conform in every point with the will of the prodigal and imperious mistress.‡ The power of Pompadour increased with her years, and with the decline of her charms, and was at the highest when the king, on account of a disgust-

* *Richelieu*, VIII. p. 149.
† *Ibid.* VIII. p. 170.
‡ *Ibid.* IX. p. 81, 85. *Hist privée*, II. p. 262, 344. III. p. 103. *Duclos*, II. p. 476, 498.

ing disease, had wholly renounced all familiarity with her. She was the only source and the only channel of favour, honours, and emoluments. She appointed ministers, generals, and ambassadors, and gave audience to foreign envoys. She kept up a correspondence with foreign courts, and conducted the interior concerns of the kingdom, as well as the department of foreign affairs.* She alone, gained over by Kaunitz, and flattered by the familiar letters of Maria Theresa, overturned that system, which the French court had prosecuted for ages; the system of annihilating, or, at least, of circumscribing, more and more, the power of the house of Austria.† By the unnatural connexion with Austria, and the appointment of statesmen and generals, destitute either of abilities or of integrity,‡ she involved France in all the great calamities

* See the authorities quoted above.

† *Mém. de Richelieu*, VII. p. 205. IX. p. 248, 249. *Duclos*, II. p. 412, &c. p. 498, &c.

‡ *Richelieu*, IV. "Elle substitua à ces hommes qui avoient approfondi les affaires administratives, les Roullier, les Saint Contest, les Paulmy, les Moras, les Cremille, les Massiac, les Berrier, et autres personnages obscurs avant leur ministère et connus depuis par leurs malversations dans les affaires."

and humiliations which befel her during the seven years' war.

The most important of all the concerns superintended by Madame de Pompadour, was to provide for the entertainment and pleasure of the king. France would have been happy, had Madame de Pompadour been as great a proficient in the art of government, as in the art of amusement.* She knew how to season every breakfast,† every dinner, or supper, every party of pleasure, every excursion, in a word, every species of diversion, with new and peculiar charms. The theatre, in particular, was a powerful instrument in her hands.‡ She was herself an excellent actress, and was likewise a good judge of the theatrical abilities of others. The gentlemen and ladies of the court vied with each other in offering their talents for the stage, and equally urgent were the applications for

* *Hist. privée*, II. p. 262. "Mais surtout elle presida aux plaisirs, et c'est en ce moment le seul departement qu'elle avoit, le seul qui lui convenoit, et qu'elle remplit avec tout le gout et tout le talent possible."

† *Richelieu*, IV. p. 86. "Pour plaire au roi elle se deguisoit, dans de petites maisons de plaisance autour de Versailles, tantôt en paysanne, et tantôt en bergere, servant à dejeuner au roi sous ces costumes."

‡ *Ibid.* VIII. p. 182. "La comedie fut bientôt un puissant instrument dans les mains de la favorite."

the honour of being admitted to the representations given by Madame de Pompadour and her company. The fondness for the drama was communicated by the court to the capital, and to the provinces, and even extended to the convents; and this theatrical mania poisoned the morals of infancy and youth more than all the other bad examples of the court had yet done.*

Madame de Pompadour's talents in the art of amusement, were equalled by those of her brother, in the art of fitting up the interior of palaces and houses in the most convenient manner, and of embellishing them with equal taste and magnificence. So late as the reign of Louis XV. this art was still in its infancy, and to the marquis de Marigny alone was it owing, that it made such astonishing progress in so short a time, and that France became the only pattern for the conveniences as well as for the pleasures of life.†

* *Vie privée de Louis XV.* II. p. 307. "C'est à elle qu'on doit ce gout scenique, qui s'est emparé generalement de toute la France, des princes, des grands, des bourgeois; qui a pénétré jusques dans les couvens, et qui, empoisonnant les mœurs de l'enfance par cette foule d'éleves dont ont besoin tant de spectacles, a porté la corruption à son comble."

† *Hist. privée*, II. p. 346, 7. "It is scarcely possible

By none of her exertions for the gratification of the king did Madame de Pompadour render herself more indispensably necessary to him, than by seeking and providing fit objects for his embraces, when disease prevented her from tasting or imparting the joys of love. The marquise undertook this task the more cheerfully, because it was by this alone that she could guard against the risk which she might have incurred, had the king, without her interference, conceived a passion for some lady of rank, who would soon, perhaps, have put an end to her authority. To prevent, therefore, the intrusion of any dangerous rival, she educated young girls of superior beauty for the use of the monarch, instructing these unfortunate children how to please the illustrious lecher,

to conceive the improvements that have been made in the art of fitting up and embellishing houses since 1722, when the happy ideas of them were for the first time displayed in the Bourbon palace. We have already observed what admiration was excited by the efforts of this art made at Choisy for the first mistresses of Louis XV. At that time it was only in its infancy. The art of embellishing, decorating, and furnishing, was in some measure created by the marquis de Marigny, whom Petronius would have styled *elegantiarum arbiter*. What a prodigious progress has luxury made in this line! Cote, who died in 1735, was the first that placed mirrors over chimney-pieces. Now-a-days the meanest citizen disdains an apartment which is not decorated with them."

and herself conducting them to his bed.* The commencement of this institution, which soon became notorious, both in France and the rest of Europe, by the name of the *parc-au-cerf*, took place in the year 1753, when the king, from seeing a miniature shewn him by one of his courtiers, fell in love with Miss Murphy, a native of Ireland, at that time a girl of fourteen.† As soon as Madame de Pompadour discovered the propensity of the king, she offered him her lonely pleasure-house, which she had built for private gratifications, in the park of Versailles. Both this and all the other places destined for the same purpose, had the appearance of cottages or farm-houses. The interior was fitted up with every possible convenience, and in a style of the most elegant simplicity. The young priestesses who inhabited this almost inaccessible temple of pleasure, every year became more numerous, and were more speedily replaced by others. Not only the foundress of this

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, IV. p. 86. "Elle se devouoit aussi à des ministéres plus indignes: elle elevoit en secret dê petites filles pour les plaisirs du roi, les preparoit à sa couche, les y plaçoit, instruisant les malheureux enfans seduits des gôuts du vieux lubrique, et de ce qu'il falloit faire pour parvenir a l'amuser."

† *Ibid.* p. 164, 5. *Hist. privée*, III. p. 16, 17.

establishment, but likewise the ministers, the bankers of the court, the valets, and many other persons exerted themselves to provide tenants for the *parc-au-cerf*, and the king himself in his journies and excursions kept a vigilant look-out to discover young beauties worthy of his embraces. "Setting aside the mischief done by this odious institution to public morals, it cost the state prodigious sums. Who can calculate the expence occasioned by the long train of pimps and their underlings, by the conveyance of the victims from all quarters of the kingdom, by their instruction in the art of pleasure, by their dress and the ornaments for their persons! Add to this, the sums that it was necessary to give to those who had not suceeeded in exciting the sluggish desires of the sultan, and who were, nevertheless, to be remunerated for their servitude, their silence, and above all, for their shame: moreover, the rewards of the nymphs who were so fortunate as to afford the monarch complete gratification: finally, the sacred obligations to those sultanas who carried in their wombs the costly pledges of their fecundity: and it will be found, that, on an average, each of them could not have cost the state much less than one million of

livres. If we suppose that only two a week, or in ten years a thousand girls passed through this singular state of probation, the result is a capital of a thousand million, which the *parc-au-cerf* must have cost. From this time the *acquits du comptant*, or orders of the king upon the treasury, without mentioning to what purpose the monies were applied, annually increased to such a degree, that the parliament at length represented to the king, that these *acquits du comptant*, which under Louis XIV. never amounted to ten millions a-year, now exceeded one hundred millions."*

The historian from whom I have quoted the preceding passage has probably exaggerated the expences of the *parc-au-cerf*; in other respects, however, he has rather diminished than magnified the secret abominations of the lascivious monarch. The fair inhabitants of the *parc-au-cerf*, who were pregnant by the king, were commonly married to officers, who received with them a considerable dowry. The children were educated at a great expence, and a provision was afterwards made for them. A courtier who had made

* *Hist. privée*, III. p. 17, 18.

the most particular enquiries concerning the adventures of the *parc-au-cerf*, assured the abbé Soulavie that the king had provided for, or as the French term it, made the fortune of at least eighteen hundred females, whom he had debauched or begotten.* When the victims of the royal lust were too dear to be purchased, they were carried off without farther ceremony. Such was the fate, among others, of four beautiful nuns in the convent of Bon-Secours, who were forcibly conveyed to the *parc-au-cerf*, and there violated. Parents lost their children and husbands their wives, without being able to discover what had become of them. Louis XV. once saw a girl, nine years old, of extraordinary beauty, and uncommonly well-grown for her age, walking with her governess in the Tuileries. Nobody knew to whom the child belonged. Sartine received directions to discover the parents and their residence. The governess was found, and the child was purchased of her for fifty louis d'ors. Louis took it into his head to wait upon the beautiful girl himself, and to educate her for his pleasure. He supplied her himself with

* *Mém. de Richelieu*, IV. p. 355.

victuals and drink; gave her clothes and play-things, and took care to anticipate all her wishes. The king, at length, overcame the aversion which Mademoiselle Tiercelin (for that was the name of the young lady) had, at first conceived for him. She bore him a son. The king remunerated her compliance and fecundity, with the disbursement of a yearly expence of one hundred thousand livres, incurred by this youthful partner of his bed.*

During the time that Louis XV. caused the most beautiful children in every part of his kingdom to be purchased or stolen, he had transient amours, in which the most odious intrigues or acts of violence were employed, with various females. He promised a Mademoiselle de Romans, who, on account of her beauty, was termed a prodigy of nature, to acknowledge her child as his own if she should become pregnant by him.† The fair Romans bore him a son, whom she nourished at her own breast, and brought up in her own lap with the greatest care, as the offspring of a king. The jealous Pompadour persuaded the monarch, in one of his cold and thoughtless moments, to violate his

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 352, 3.
† *Ibid.* IV. p. 350.

royal word, and stole from Mademoiselle de Romans her only child, her darling and her pride. The infant was so artfully concealed, and at the same time so neglected, that he was not discovered without great difficulty after the decease of Louis XV.—Another lady, Madame de Mailli Brezé, died of grief, because the king had so little regard for her affection, and the sacrifice of her honour as to refuse a favour which she had asked for her husband.* Louis sometimes distributed among the ladies who belonged to his familiar circle, *bonbons* that were mixed with powder of cantharides. These *bonbons* frequently inflamed the appetites of those who had partaken of them to such a pitch that they rushed with irresistible ardor into each other's embraces. It was affirmed that many ladies died of the effects of the dangerous drug and the debaucheries which they had occasioned.† These detestable practices were not more notorious than the *orgies des echanges*, as they were denominated, in which the king relinquished Pompadour to the embraces of his minister, Choiseul, while he himself indulged in the delights of love

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 355.
† *Ibid.*

with the duchess de Grammont, the sister of the latter. If any thing could appear incredible of a prince such as Louis XV. we might be permitted to question the truth of the last mentioned particulars, and likewise the circumstance of his having violated by force a Madame de Salis, who is said, from despair to have put an end to her life.*

Frequently as Louis XV. changed his private mistresses, he was extremely fearful of changing those whom he had publicly acknowledged.† Hence Madame de Pompadour had leisure to collect the prodigious wealth, and the copious treasures of nature and art which she amassed while she was in power. The king gave her five hundred thousand livres to purchase her hotel at Paris, and the decorations and furniture cost no less a sum. She had hotels of the same kind at Fontainebleau and Versailles, but they were all surpassed by the inchanted palace of Bellevue.‡ For her all the French artists vied with each other in the display of their talents, and every quarter of the globe poured forth its most beautiful and costly productions.

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 353.
† *Ibid.* IV. p. 479.
‡ *Ibid.* VIII. p. 175, &c. *Hist. privée*, III. p. 10, 11, IV. 29.

The palace of no monarch in Europe was so superbly and so elegantly furnished as the country-house and the hotels of Madame de Pompadour. The sale of her effects, after her death, lasted a whole year. It was a spectacle to which people went from curiosity as to a museum, where they daily beheld rarities which they had never seen before.* None ventured to calculate the millions which the marquis de Marigny, the brother of the mistress, found among her effects. The marquise, providing against every accident that might happen, had invested large sums in every bank in Europe, which swelled the property she left in France to an amount that cannot be ascertained. She shewed her contempt for the nation by appointing a knight of St. Louis to be her *ecuyer*, a female of quality to be her first lady of the bed-chamber, and a *procureur au châtelet* to be her *maitre d'hôtel*.† She richly deserved the epigrams and the execrations that were lavished upon her during her life, and after

* *Hist. privée*, IV. 29. "La seule vente de son mobilier dura un an. C'etoit un spectacle, où l'on alloit par curiosité: on y trouvoit continuellement des raretés, qu'on n'avoit vues nulle part. Il sembloit que toutes les parties du monde se fussent rendues tributaires du luxe de la marquise."

† *Ibid.* III. p. 11.

her death.* Soulavie, who suspects the duke de Choiseul of poisoning the dauphin, the dauphiness, the queen, and many other persons, likewise charges that minister with the crime of having removed his benefactress, the marquise de Pompadour, out of his way by the same expedient.†

After the death of Pompadour, the king was neither better nor the people more happy than before. Power, consequence, wealth, and honours, now devolved entirely to the duke de Choiseul and his sister the duchess de Grammont, who did not make a more laudable use of them than their predecessor. The duchess de Grammont had, to use the language of the times, some *passades* with the king, but was disappointed in her wish to become his professed mistress. For the influence she possessed, she was more indebted to her brother than to herself. Men of the highest rank were as assiduous in their attendance on the little Julie, who enjoyed the confidence of Madame de Grammont, as on the king himself; and the poetasters not only celebrated Julie's charms, but sung the graces of her favourite lap-dog.‡

* *Hist. privée*, IV.

† *Richelieu*, IV. p. 341, 2. Pampadour died in 1764.

‡ *Ibid.* IV. p. 253. "Elle recevoit chez elle des

Louis XV. after the decease of Madame de Pompadour, had some thoughts of marrying some young and beautiful princess, and of breaking up his seraglio. This idea, it is true, was of short duration; but notwithstanding all the variety and novelty of enjoyment which the *parc-au-cerf* afforded, the empty head and heart of the monarch wanted that kind of female society and entertainment which long habit had rendered almost indispensably necessary. He found both in a person of the lowest character, who, from her earliest youth, had been a servant of the common Venus, and had belonged from the middle of the year 1767, to a count du Barry, who trafficked with her charms, after he had himself enjoyed them to satiety.* Du Barry recommended her, among others, to the

grands de haut parage, des seigneurs même. Les grands et la petite noblesse etoient admis pêle-mêle chez Julie; ils venoient à l'envi mendier et s'avilir chez elle. Des poëteraux lui adressoient des vers sur ses graces; et pour lui plaire ils en composaient aussi à l'honneur de son chien."

* The countess du Barry was born in 1744, and was the daughter of a *commis aux aides* at Vaucouleurs. See the *Lettres de la comptesse du Barry*, p. 1. It is not true that she was the daughter of a monk and a cook, as is affirmed in the *Mém. de Richelieu*, IV. p. 356; neither is it a circumstance so unprecedented as Soulavie imagined, that a king should place a common prostitute so near the throne.

king's valet, Le Bel, as a morsel worthy of his master.* After he had seen her, Le Bel, in June, 1768, introduced Mademoiselle Lange, by which name she then went, to the king. Louis was so delighted with the charms and the other accomplishments of the practised fair one, that he declared, he had never enjoyed so much pleasure in the arms of any other woman. The duke de Noailles explained the enigma to the monarch by this ingenuous reply: "It is evident that your majesty has never been in a brothel."† The major part of the courtiers merely observed that the king had an extraordinary taste. The duke de Richelieu and his party supported the new mistress in the most strenuous manner.‡ No person was more inveterate against her than the duke de Choiseul, who was too proud to bend to a strumpet, and the duchess de Grammont could never forget or forgive her having been deprived of the favours of the king by a common prostitute. Both were unable to prevent the new mistress from being publicly presented to the king. On the day appointed for the presentation, the minister and his emissaries excited such a sensation in the

* *Lettres*, p. 22, &c.
† *Richelieu*, as above. *Vie privée*, IV. p. 159.
‡ *Ibid.* IX. p. 356, 7.

public mind that all the streets and avenues to the palace of Versailles were thronged with an innumerable concourse of people. The duke de Choiseul directed the attention of the king to the assembled multitude, and Louis was on the point of countermanding the ceremony, when Madame du Barry, beauteous as a goddess, entered, and was presented by the duke de Richelieu, with these words: *Sire, voici Madame du Barry; elle entrera, Sire, si vous en donnez l'ordre.* The king, taken by surprise, went to meet her, acknowledged her as the countess du Barry, and immediately assigned her the apartments which had been inhabited by Madame de Pompadour.* Not long before this presentation, the king insisted that she should be married to the count du Barry, a brother of the man whose mistress she had been, that, as he alledged, it might be out of his power to commit a folly.† This marriage was afterwards annulled. The countess aspired to the honour of becoming queen of France, a design which the ministers devoted to her, encouraged in

* *Richelieu*, IV. p. 405.

† *Lettres*, p. 30. "Qu'on la marie donc promptement, afin que je sois dans l'impossibilité de faire quelque sottise."

their letters, but privately frustrated, but the accomplishment of which they would probably have been unable to hinder, had the life of the king been prolonged. At the golden toilette, which the king presented to his mistress, and the like to which neither the queen at a former period nor the young dauphiness afterwards possessed, was seen a mirror, over which two cupids holding a crown, hovered in such a manner that it was suspended over the head of the countess whenever she looked in the glass.* After the presentation, the countess endeavoured to gain the duke de Choiseul, but he rejected with scorn every overture towards a reconciliation. From this moment du Barry cooperated with the chancellor Maupeou in the fall of Choiseul's party, which she at length effected about the end of the year 1770, by representing to the king, that Choiseul openly espoused the cause of the refractory parliaments, and thus encouraged them in their disobedience to his will.† Shortly before the disgrace

* *Vie privée*, IV. 266.

† See, in particular, the letter of the chancellor in the *Lettres*, p. 67. "You have no less influence in affairs of state, than if you held yourself the reins of government. As, therefore, our interests are one, we ought to be perfectly agreed, and to take no measures, except for the ge-

of her brother, the duchess de Grammont was desirous of making the duke de Noailles, the mediator between herself and "the divinity who was the delight of the court."* The countess, with an honest and noble indignation, rejected the hypocritical professions and false tenders of the duchess, recapitulating, in her answer to the duke de Noailles, all the malicious calumnies and hostile schemes which the duchess had circulated and planned against her and the king. After the disgrace of Choiseuil, the princes and princesses (with the exception of the dauphin and dauphiness, particularly the former‡) the mi-

neral welfare, in which, as good subjects, we find also our own advantage. (The hypocrite!) The day before yesterday, we gave, as you prettily express it, a sound drubbing to the Parliament, but that haughty body is instigated by the duke de Choiseul, to revolt against the new law enacted by his majesty." On the 24th of December, 1770, were issued two *Lettres de cachet* for the dukes de Choiseuil and de Praslin. *Ibid.* p. 170.

* Such is the expression of the duke de Noailles. *Lettres*, p. 65.---"avec la divinité qui fait les delices de la cour."

† It was long attempted to effect a reconciliation between the countess and the dauphin, his consort and his sisters. These illustrious ladies soon entered into an accommodation with her, but the heir to the crown continued immoveable. At length he was prevailed upon to suffer the countess to be introduced to him, but treated her with the utmost contempt. "You would not imagine," says the countess, in a letter to the duke d'Aiguillon, to

nisters and generals, the dignified clergy and courtiers, prostrated themselves at the feet of the countess, and every impartial person must acknowledge, that though the courtezan might be more arrogant and wanton, she was much less contemptible than any of those by whom she was adored. On the dissolution of the parliament, almost all the princes who had given it their support had recourse to the countess, that they might through her means effect their reconciliation with the king. This was the case among others with the duke of Orleans, who, in the sequel, likewise made use of the countess to procure the king's consent to his marriage with Madame de Montesson. The countess promised to do her utmost, and then continued in a familiar tone: *Tenez gros père, voulez-vous que je vous donne un bon conseil. Commencez par epouser, nous verrons par la suite à faire mieux pour vous : j'y suis moi-méme fortement interessée.** It was not from arrogance, but

what a length that great unmannerly boy carried his rudeness. When we were with him, he was or pretended to be engaged in looking out of the window; though we were announced, he never quitted that posture; we, at length, left the room, without having been honoured by him with a single look."

* *Lettres*, p. 151.

youthful levity and want of delicacy of sentiment, that she gave the first prince of the blood the appellation of *gros père*. To the same cause must be ascribed, an expression which she made use of to the king, who was preparing coffee in her apartment, and did not perceive that it boiled over. *Eh! la France*, cried she, *prends donc garde, ton caffé f—t le camp.** With the importunities of the princes, it was difficult for the countess to avoid giving way to petulance and her former habits.

The prince de Soubise had the meanness to offer the viscount du Barry one of his relations in marriage; and the prince of Condé, the son-in-law of the former, consented to the match on these conditions: that the king should purchase his hotel, make him a present of a million and a half of livres to pay his debts, and give him a seat in the council. The two former demands were granted, but not the latter, and yet the prince of Condé rejoiced that he had made so good a market of the honour of his alliance with the

* What was much more indecorous than the familiar *la France* of the countess, was the appellation of *fiérot*, used by her brother-in-law, when speaking of the king in the company of the gamblers with whom he associated.

countess du Barry.* The same prince, previous to the first visit which he paid the countess, sent to inquire at what hour he might have the happiness of paying his respects to her. At the second visit, the prince spared himself the trouble of making a similar inquiry; but, on this occasion, the countess made him wait a considerable time in her anti-chamber, to bring him to his duty. The prince accommodated himself to her wishes, and redoubled his attentions,† to make the countess forget that he had sought to effect his reconciliation with the king by means of the chancellor, and not through her. After such examples, it was excusable in the other courtiers and ecclesiastics, if, in their solicitude to please the countess, they proved unmindful of their dignity and duty. The chancellor, Maupeou, always called the countess his dear niece, and shewed her, amidst expressions of the most delicate flattery, all the civilities which she asked of him, or which he thought would be agreeable to her.‡ For none of the ministers who cringed to the

* *Lettres*, p. 153, &c.

† *Ibid.* p. 158.

‡ See the collection of Letters to and from the countess.

royal favourite had she performed so much as for the duke d'Aiguillon, and none repaid her kindness with such black ingratitude. By means of the chancellor, Maupeou, she saved this worthless wretch from the hands of the executioner; she loaded him with honours and riches; she gave him all that a beautiful woman can give to her seducer, and, nevertheless, the duke sought to effect the ruin of the chancellor through the countess, and the disgrace of the countess through a Madame de Neuquerque. The chancellor discovered his perfidy, and immediately communicated it to the countess, who was inflamed with just indignation, which she poured forth in a letter that reflects as much honour on her understanding, as disgrace on the heart of the traitor.* The unmasked and trembling villain threw himself at the feet of his offended benefactress, who had the generosity to forget the injury which the hypocrite had intended her. The most important, and,

* *Lettres*, p. 192. 'Vous, que j'ai sauvé de la main du bourreau! vous, dont j'ai eu la foiblesse d'ecouter la passion! vous que j'ai comblé de biens, d'honneurs et de dignités! vous, qui devriez baisir les traces de mes pas, vous avez eu l'indignité de me tromper, et vous presentez-vous même au roi une femme pour supplanter votre bienfaitrice!"

at the same time, the most obsequious of all the ministers, was Terray, the comptroller-general. This hard-hearted man, not content with gratifying all the wishes of the countess, and admitting all the orders drawn by the prodigal favourite on the banker of the court, anticipated all her wants, placed, unsolicited, very large sums at her disposal, and shewed her the way how both of them might cheat the king, and plunder the nation. The countess having, in the early period of her exaltation, spoken favourably to the king of the comptroller-general, he wrote a letter to her, saying, that this favour deserved on his part the most lively gratitude; that the king allowed her a pension of thirty thousand livres a month, which, on account of the great expence attendant on her station, was by far too little, as was evinced by the *mandats* which she was obliged to draw upon the banker of the court; that he would therefore prevail upon the king to double this pension, as it would produce a saving, and obviate the necessity of *mandats*, but that he would tell her in confidence, that he would direct her orders to be paid as before.* Not long afterwards, an annuity

* *Lettres*, p. 60, 61.

of three hundred thousand livres reverted to the royal exchequer, by the death of the count de Clermont. The abbé Terray requested the king to settle one-third of this sum on the countess du Barry; and the favourite repaid his zeal by prevailing on his majesty to give Terray fifty thousand livres per annum out of the remainder.* The countess sold her annuity for one million in ready money to the royal treasury; and Terray assured her, that she might nevertheless continue to draw her one hundred thousand livres.† Soon afterwards, on occasion of farming out the manufacture of gun-powder, Terray demanded a *pot de vin* of three hundred thousand livres. The farmers complained of this requisition to the chancellor, and the chancellor laid the affair before the king. Terray then pretended that he had required the three hundred thousand livres for the countess, and in a gallant letter begged her acceptance of this present. The countess replied, that the chancellor might be right, but that the conduct of the abbé was much too polite for her to enter into a rigid examination

* *Lettres*, p. 88, 89.
† *Ibid.* p. 113.

of the real state of the case; that she had effaced the disadvantageous impressions made by the chancellor, and convinced the king that the abbé was a man full of resources.* In the year 1773, the *homme d'affaires* of the countess demanded six hundred thousand livres, without specifying the purpose to which the money was to be applied. Terray returned for answer, that the royal exchequer was not so inexhaustible as she seemed to think; that she had drawn from it eighteen millions, exclusive of many smaller articles, nevertheless, three hundred thousand livres were at her service, if that sum would suffice.† It was not a sense of duty that caused the backwardness of the chancellor on this occasion—it was intended to instigate the countess, in the hope of an unlimited liberality, to effect the ruin of the chancellor, and to procure his office for the abbé. Eighteen millions in five years certainly appears a prodigious sum; and yet I cannot assert with the author of the private history of Louis XV. either that the countess du Barry cost the state more than all the other mistresses of that mo-

* *Lettres*, p. 135, 136.
† *Ibid.* p. 138, 139.

narch put together, or that Louis imposed more taxes than all his sixty-five predecessors. Neither perhaps ought it even to be said, that the countess du Barry received more from the state during the above-mentioned period than any other mistress, but only that she squandered more, and by her profusion gave very great offence. Still greater scandal was occasioned by the prodigality and insolence of her brother-in-law, count du Barry, whose mistress she had been. This man lived at Paris in the grossest debauchery, played as high as he could find any one to play against him, drew, if he lost, upon the royal exchequer, and assured those who lamented his bad-luck that *frerot*, as he familiarly styled the king, should pay all. The countess complained of this, in 1771, to the sister of the count, and he had the impudence to send the former this answer: "You lately complained to my sister (probably with the intention that I should be informed of it) that I draw too freely on the banker of the court. The matter has certainly been misrepresented. I have not yet drawn for more than two million three hundred thousand livres; and had I even received more, who would make any objection?

Not the king, for nobody has the courage to tell him of it; not you, who are indebted to me for your prosperity, and must suffer me to enjoy a portion of your fortune; not the banker of the court, to whom my orders are repaid in ready money; not the abbé Terray, who is afraid of us, and whom we might annihilate with a word; not the chancellor, our uncle, whom we keep in his place. Nobody, then, has the least reproach to make against us. Let us then continue to avail ourselves of the gifts of Fortune as long as she is favourable to us."* The count actually did continue to conduct himself in a way that revolted all Paris; involved the ministers in the greatest embarrassments, and threw the countess into no small alarm. On this she wrote to him as follows: "I tell you, Sir, that it is now your turn to receive good advice from me, in payment for that which you formerly gave. You assume airs which do not become you. All Paris murmurs against you, and, I must confess, not without reason. In the first place, you boast, that since my residence at court, you are in your fifth million; secondly, you were

* *Lettres*, p. 82.

guilty of an egregious folly to marry your mistress to a knight of St. Louis, and yet continue to live with her in the face of the public, whom you set at defiance by such conduct. In the third place, you have made a prodigious disturbance in the *Hôtel des Fermes*, in order to procure one of your creatures the situation of a director. The farmers-general have not only complained to me of this disturbance, but that you make a boast of what you have done throughout all Paris." The circumstance to which the countess alludes was this: The count du Barry went to the *Hôtel des Fermes*, at Paris, to solicit a vacant place of director for his friend, Desaint. The farmers-general replied, that the place was already given away, and that it was not possible to eject at pleasure any person from a situation to which he had been appointed. The count persisted in his request; the farmers-general made fresh difficulties. The count, at length, began to talk in a higher tone, and asked the farmers-general, if they did not know that he had the honour to give the king a mistress; that he had made the duke d'Aiguillon minister for foreign affairs, and M. de Boynes minister of marine; that he maintained the chancellor, the comptroller-

general, &c. in their places? adding, that they ought to be cautious how they affronted him. The farmers-general were petrified by this extraordinary harangue, and complied with the wishes of the count.*

The insolence of count du Barry was not more unprecedented than the abject servility of two dignified ecclesiastics, and of the duke de Tresmes. The countess du Barry got up one morning to sign a contract, which was brought her for that purpose by a notary. On rising from bed, the papal nuncio carried her one of her slippers, and cardinal Rocheaymon the other. This obsequiousness was made public by the notary,† and gave the more offence, as report added, that the lady was quite naked, and that the two ecclesiastics repaid themselves for their trouble by the glances which they stole at the unveiled charms of the countess.‡ The adulation of the duke de Tresmes, a man of a very ordinary and deformed person, who thought himself happy when he could amuse the countess with his hunch-back, was, if possible, still more scandalous. This man, having

* *Lettres*, p. 117, 118, and the observations annexed.
† *Ibid.* p. 14.
‡ *Hist. privée*, IV. p. 264.

once called at her house, when she was not at home, wrote upon the door, *Le sapajou de Madame la comtesse du Barry est venu pour lui rendre ses hommages et la faire rire.**

Among the proofs of arrogance which are related of the countess du Barry herself, none made a greater noise than the revenge which she took on the young and beautiful marquise de Rozen. This revenge, however, appears to have proceeded from indelicate petulance, than from overweening presumption. Madame de Rozen conceived as strong an attachment for the countess du Barry, as did the latter for the marquise. An intimacy took place between the ladies, and they lived on the most familiar footing, till the marquise, who was *dame d'honneur* to the countess de Provence, received a reprimand from that princess because she associated with Madame du Barry. On this the marquise broke off all connexion with the countess, or, at least, behaved with a coldness which could not escape universal observation. The countess complained to the king on the subject; and his majesty replied, that the marquise was a child, and deserved

* *Hist. privée*, p. 265.

the rod. The incensed countess took the king at his word. She next day invited the marquise into her house, sent for her into her *boudoir*, and there caused her to be whipped with rods by four of her maid servants. If it were possible to atone for so gross an affront, it could only be done by such a letter as the countess wrote to the injured marquise.* The two ladies were soon afterwards reconciled by the duke d'Aiguillon.

The countess du Barry, notwithstanding her love of expence, was innocent of that offensive splendour with which Choiseul's vanity celebrated both the reception of the dauphiness and the nuptials of the dauphin, and thus mocked the misery of the nation. All Paris thronged to the tailor and embroiderer, who were employed to make the clothes of the king and the princes. The king's suit was so beautiful, and so rich, that those people declared themselves unable to produce any thing more elegant or more superb. With the dresses corresponded the equipages and *fêtes*, which infinitely surpassed the so highly celebrated festivities of Louis XIV. The mere *bouquet* of the fire-works, which

* *Lettres*, p. 129.

afforded but a momentary pleasure, was composed of thirty thousand rockets, each of which cost a crown. This prodigality of the court formed a melancholy contrast with the dearth or famine which prevailed in various provinces, and was the occasion of dangerous insurrections. It was computed that, in the districts of La Marche and Le Limousin, at least four thousand persons died of hunger, and about the same number perished on the day when the hundreds of thousands, who had seen the fire-works given by the city of Paris, trampled upon one another in their eagerness to witness the illuminations on the *Bouvelards*.*

The countess du Barry was as innocent of the excessive abuse of the *lettres de cachet*, which the ministers of Louis XV. rendered subservient to the gratification of their criminal passions, as she was of the last-mentioned calamities. When a minister or a courtier, who possessed any influence took a fancy to a beautiful married woman, her husband was torn from her by a *lettre de cachet*, and confined as a state-prisoner. The duke de Valliere, who was at the head of the department of

* *Hist. privée*, IV. p. 179, 180, 188.

lettres de cachet, threw the husband of his mistress, Madame Sabbatin, into a dungeon, where he died, and compelled another to marry the perfidious woman.*

The countess du Barry, her brother-in-law, whose mistress she had been, and his son, indeed, attained the greatest consequence, honours, and wealth, by the most disgraceful arts. Instances of this kind, however, were not rare, especially at the time of Madame de Pompadour. The father of that favourite partook of a magnificent entertainment given by the principal financiers of the capital. At the conclusion of the repast the Sieur de Poisson, a man of coarse manners and a sarcastic disposition, suddenly burst into a loud laugh, and asked his companions if they could guess the cause of his mirth. "I cannot forbear laughing," continued he, "at the sumptuous manner in which we live. A stranger would take us for princes. And you, Monsieur de Montmartel are the son of a publican; you, Monsieur de Savalette, are the son of a dealer in vinegar; you, Bournet, are the son of a lacquey; and as for myself, you all know what I am." When he had in this manner gone

* *Mém de Richelieu*, IX. p. 360.

round the company, it appeared that not one of them belonged to a considerable or even respectable family, and that, on the other hand, many had acquired their wealth by the most disgraceful expedients.*

Upon the whole, the manners of the court and capital were so thoroughly depraved before the accession of du Barry to power, that it seemed impossible to make any further progress in vice, though the scandal of it might be capable of aggravation.† The dignified and inferior clergy were equally debached with the other classes of society. This was particularly demonstrated at the time when the heads of the clergy combined with the police of Paris, to establish a secret tribunal for the unworthy members of their order. All the common women of Paris were promised a considerable reward, if they would give such information of an ecclesiastic that he might be taken in the fact. These ladies immediately sent word to the nearest commissary of police, whenever an ecclesiastic came to pay them a visit.

* *Hist. privée*, III. p. 15, 16.

† See, on this subject, *L'Observateur Anglois*, I. p. 174, 175, 259.

The commissary repaired with his assistants to the house of the informant, surprised the sinner in the bosom of guilt, drew up a report in the presence of witnesses, and transmitted it to the tribunal. The abbé Soulavie saw these reports, and assures us, that their publication would be a last judgment for numberless ecclesiastics.* Many of the dignified clergy offended as often and as grossly against the laws of decorum as the most debauched courtiers.†

One of the greatest injuries which the two prodigal mistresses of Louis XV. the marquise de Pompadour and the countess du Barry did to the nation, was by the example which they gave of unprecedented magnificence, and the incessant changes of furniture, equipages, attire, and ornaments, which they introduced. This example of the two mistresses was followed as closely as possible by the ladies of the court, the women of the capital, and even those of the provinces; since Paris continued to attract more and more, not only the people of rank and fortune, but likewise the youth of both sexes from all quar-

* *Mém de Richelieu*, IV. p. 234, 5.

† *Observ. Anglois*, I. p. 183, &c.

ters of the kingdom, and sent back to their homes, such as were not swallowed up in the vortex, infected with the follies and the vices of the capital.* Before Louis XV. had any acknowledged mistresses, the new fashions were named after the most distinguished men at court, or the most interesting events of the day ;† and these fashions lasted several years. During the government of mistresses, especially of Pompadour and du Barry, all the artists, all the *coeffeurs* and *coeffeuses* exerted their talents to gratify the rage for fashion of the divinities worshipped by the king and the whole court. Never did fashion reign more absolute from the court over Paris, and from Paris over the greatest part of Europe, than from 1745 to 1774. Never were the changes of fashion more rapid, and probably to this very reason it is owing, that the writers of that period take less notice of the prevailing fashions than those of former times. Every thing subject to the em-

† *Mercier Tableau de Paris*, T. II. P. II. p. 387.

† An ancient popular song, *la Chanson du Pere Barnabas* was, for instance, applied to cardinal Fleury, and "les etrennes, les modes, les coeffures furent pendant *trois ans* en bequilles. Quelque temps après on fit des manchons à la Girard, et des modes à la Cadiere."

pire of fashion changed so quickly, that it was impossible to keep pace with these alterations. The more rapid was the succession of fashions, the less notice was attracted by any new phenomenon of that kind, which was scarcely expected to last any longer than a day. The more luxury increased, the more important persons the *merchandes des modes, coeffeurs,* and *coffeuses* became. Never was such a thing known before, as that a *coeffeur* should, by his trade, acquire a fortune of twenty thousand livres a-year, like Dayé, the coeffeur of Madame de Pompadour.*

During the reign of Louis XV. genuine as well as false philosophy advanced many degrees, but the latter considerably more than the former. People acquired more correct notions respecting political constitutions, the government of states, morals, and education. The spirit of bigotry and persecution subsided, and dogmatic controversies became subjects of ridicule. Unfortunately, receding superstition was followed by the no less dangerous doc-

* *Richelieu,* IX. p. 84, 85. Madame de Pompadour once asked this Dayé, by what means he had acquired such great repute. "C'est Madame," replied Dayé, "parce que je coeffois l'autre," meaning Madame de Chateauroux.

trines of infidelity. Neither the pure light of truth, nor the dazzling brilliance of false philosophy was so generally diffused among the higher as among the middling classes. It could not escape the notice of any observer, that the reign of Louis XV. produced not only fewer female writers, but also a smaller number of such women as distinguished themselves by their talents, their charms, and their influence on the *ton* of society than the age of Louis XIV.* Very few females acquired celebrity by their scientific attainments and their scientific works.† The others confined themselves to novels, fairy-tales, poetry, or poetical translations, moral essays, or works of education.‡ Among all these females not one obtained a reputation equal to that of Madame

* *Thomas*, p. 151. "Not but that at the present day there are women who have written, and still continue to write with distinction; they are well known, but their number is daily decreasing, and is infinitely smaller than at the revival of literature, or even under Louis XIV."

† As Madame du Chatelet, *Hist. lit. des Femmes Franç.* IV. p. 311, &c. and a Madame D---. *Ibid.* p. 554, &c.

‡ All these authoresses are noticed in the fourth and fifth volumes of *Hist. litt. de Femmes Françoises.* The most known were Madame de Grafigny, Le Prince de Beaumont, and Elie de Beaumont, du Bocage, Riccoboni, &c.

de Sevigné and her fair contemporaries; neither did any of them produce a work that is still read with avidity. If the works of Voltaire and other national writers rendered a certain species of literary knowledge more general than it had formerly been, this knowledge was, however, much more superficial. People studied not for their own pleasure, not to cultivate their heart and understanding, but to make a parade of their attainments in society, to be able to speak and to pronounce an opinion concerning new literary productions and their authors.* This superficial shallowness proceeded from the system of education, the manners and mutual relations of both sexes at court, in the capital, and in the other chief cities of the kingdom.

The daughters of people of the higher ranks, and even of those belonging to the more respectable classes of the commonalty, were educated, almost without exception, in convents, where the system of

* I here speak from the concurrent testimonies and sentiments of the most intelligent observers and moralists, of a Rousseau in *Emile*, Liv. V. of a Mercier in the *Tableau de Paris*; of a Lauragais in *l'An 2440*; of a Thomas in the *Essai sur les Femmes*. See, in particular, *Mercier*, II. p 91, &c.

instruction was but ill-adapted to their future destination, and where they were least of all taught the duties and occupations of good wives and mistresses of families. From these convents they were not taken till they were going to be married. The marriages of children were decided, not by mutual choice and inclination, but by the convenience of parents or families. The youth received from the hands of his parents, without a murmur, or after fruitless remonstrances, a wife whom he neither knew nor loved; and he conceived that he fulfilled all the duties of matrimony, if he begot children to inherit his name and the family estates. Young females surrendered themselves without opposition to the men selected for their husbands, overjoyed to attain the inestimable advantages of the married state, and liberty to do whatever they pleased, under the name of their husbands. This predominant mode of contracting marriages must have produced a corruption of morals, had they not been previously depraved. So much the more lamentable were the consequences of the unnatural authority of parents, as the prevailing manners allowed the women a freedom unchecked by any restraint, and required of the men an al-

most total neglect of their wives.* No sooner had youth quitted the college, or the academy, than they fell into the snares of the public courtezans, of whom thirty or forty thousand were dispersed through all the streets of Paris. In their commerce with these unhappy victims of unhallowed love, they acquired a free and indelicate tone, which they retained even in the society of women of character, and insensibly communicated to the latter.† The women began so early to receive visits from men, and continued till so late an hour to pursue in their company every species of pleasure, that there was an end of domestic life, and husband and wife, parents, children, and relatives were separated from one another, and were each in-

* Husbands were decried as monsters, if they revenged the intrigues of their wives, except their *faux pas* became notorious, and were made the subject of epigrams, or satirical verses. It was even a law of politeness, never to speak in company of the amours of married women, unless when their publicity was inevitable.

† *Mercier*, II. p. 72, 95. "The number of common women has given our young men a tone of freedom which they assume with women of the best character. Our conversation abounds in indelicate pleasantries, puns and scandalous stories. The remark of J. J. Rousseau is but too just, that the women of Paris, from the habit of frequenting all the public places, and mingling with men, have acquired their boldness, their audacity, their look, and almost their gait."

volved in a different vortex. As the men lived almost exclusively among women, and the women among men, each sex made the defects of the other its own. The men became effeminate, and the women masculine. Amid the incessant dissipations in which they were engaged, it was equally impossible for both sexes to find time for serious and useful occupations: hence the number of those who possessed the talent of pleasing in conversation was continually increasing, while the well-informed and reflecting part of the community declined in a like proportion. Amusement was the grand spring, that set both men and women in motion; the art of entertaining was the highest accomplishment and merit to which men of letters and authors aspired, and which the fair sex valued more highly than the most useful works, or discoveries. The more it became fashionable to estimate the talents of the men by the degree of pleasure they afforded to the women, the more the latter set up for judges of the former, and as such they were acknowledged even by Rousseau.

When ladies had attained a certain age, they had the choice of two evils, either

to join the party of the female devotees or that of the female literati.* Women, old and young, handsome and homely, interfered in all important public as well as private concerns, wrote twenty or thirty letters a day, besieged the ministers, fatigued the clerks, kept their *bureaux* and register-offices, procured places for their husbands, lovers, and friends, and accomplished almost every thing they undertook.† This extraordinary influence the sex obtained not, as formerly, by superior talents and acquirements, or by that esteem which genuine virtue never fails to command, but solely by the imbecility of the men. Strong attachment and profound respect for women, were still more uncommon than prominent female merit. Though the men despised them, still they served them with the abject submission of

* *Mercier*, II. p. 98.

† *Ibid.* 96. "Ajoutons que les femmes depuis quelques années jouent publiquement le rôle d'entremetteuses d'affaires. Elles ecrivent vingt lettres par jour, renouvellent les solicitations, assiegent les ministres, fatiguent les commis. Elles ont leurs bureaux, leurs registres." And again, p. 191. "Les femmes dans la capitale jouissent non seulement de la plus grande liberté possible, mais encore du plus ineroyable credit. Par des manœuvres secretes et particulieres elles sont l'ame invisible de toutes les affaires; elles reussissent sans presque sortir de chez elles; elles determinent la voix publique dans des circonstances où elle sembloit d'abord demeurer indecise."

slaves. I shall conclude this portion of my work with the observations made by Thomas on the manners of his time, and with a particular reference to the condition of the fair sex, towards the end of the reign of Louis XV.

"An universal passion, which bore down every consideration, strengthened the love of society in the female sex. Seduction was rendered more easy. The men associated less with one another. The women, relinquishing their native modesty, accustomed themselves to throw off a reserve which was honourable to them. Both sexes degenerated. The one placed too high a value on things that were calculated to please, and the other in independence.

"As people were much more solicitous to be agreeable companions than good citizens, they entered into the great world at a much earlier age than formerly. The young men were corrupted by the women, and to the defects of their age they added those which were produced by their conquests. They communicated their follies and their vices to a great multitude of women, because their desires far outweighed their attainments; because they had an empty head and a warm heart; because

they were inconstant from vanity, multiplied their adventures from *ennui*, and gave themselves no concern about the public opinion, which did not yet exist for them.

" Under these circumstances, the want of amusement and the desire to please could not but diffuse more and more the love of society; and people could not fail soon to arrive at that point, when this love of society, being carried to the highest pitch, could not but ruin every thing by interfering in all the concerns of life. This is perhaps the point at which we stand at the present moment.

" Among a people by whom the love of society is carried to such a pitch of extravagance, there can be no such thing as domestic life. All the sentiments of nature, which spring up in retirement and thrive in solitude, must be weakened. Women must necessarily be worse wives and worse mothers.

" Manners influence prejudices more than they are influenced by them. Hence conjugal fidelity is left to the vulgar, the sacrifices of friendship to the tender-hearted, and the enthusiasm of love to the knights of antiquity. All sentiments are exclusive. What should people do with

them? They give to one what belongs to all.

"The more one general bond is extended, the more all particular ties are relaxed. You appear to be attached to the whole world and belong to nobody. In this manner falsehood increases. The less you actually feel, the more you must assume the appearance of feeling.

"In consequence of an extraordinary contradiction, the very word *sentiment* throws people into raptures, and yet every genuine and profound sentiment is a subject of ridicule. Perhaps they imagine that what they themselves never feel cannot possibly exist. Perhaps they do themselves sufficient justice to perceive that they have no claim to genuine sentiment.

"Never was the word *romantic* more common than at present. This word affords a two-fold gratification to vanity. It relieves us from the necessity of respecting virtue which we do not possess, and of blushing at our own foibles and vices. It likewise makes us content with our own notions of things. We fancy that we have thoroughly investigated them, and that we perfectly know what man is, and what he is capable of being.

"We talk a great deal of pleasure, and

pleasure is no where to be found. The soul rushes precipitately towards objects from which it ought to keep at a certain distance. The imagination leaves us cold, because it can do nothing more for us. We have lost every illusion.

" This inanity of the heart, this debility of the soul produced amusement—the watch-word of cold hearts and weak minds—a remarkable word, which ought to have been rendered ridiculous by the importance which is attached to it; which presupposes that we are dead to virtue, and perhaps also to the enjoyments of sense.

" This amusement, this unknown something, which engages neither the imagination, nor the understanding, nor the heart, and perhaps consists wholly of certain forms, is the sole object to which every thing is rendered subservient. The talent to please causes us to give the possessor credit for virtues and to overlook his vices. Nobody has the heart to treat meanness with contempt, when it comes recommended by the graces. We confine our observation to trifles. The heart grows contracted. Agreeable or disagreeable, become the two principal words in the language.

" Being continually on one theatre,

self-love is more and more inflamed and strengthened. But it is again circumscribed by the love of society which it produces. It is suppressed, and again raises its head. You half reveal your private sentiments, and retain the rest. A conflict ensues, in which it continually strives to conquer, without appearing to struggle for the victory, in which it conceals its efforts that it may not disclose its pretensions.

"All these things together produce in both sexes a restless frivolity, and a serious and busy vanity. The most distinguishing characteristic of modern manners is the rage for shining, for attaching great consequence to inferior duties, and a great value to trivial efforts. We speak with an important air of the insignificant circumstances of the past and present day. The understanding and the heart have a cold activity, which extends to a thousand objects, without fixing upon any, and which communicates motion without imparting energy.

"When the taste for literature and the affectation of wit are combined with a passionate love of society, different effects must result from this mixture. At such a time, a general desire to appear well-

informed must necessarily prevail, though people have not leisure to acquire information. Hence arise a multitude of smatterers; detached philosophical ideas, which great geniuses have thrown out from their retirement, and which these would-be wits repeat, mangle, or tear from one another in society; light conversations on the gravest subjects; ready-made forms of wit, or the wit of the memory, when they can produce none of their own; the institution and emulation of literary societies; pretensions of every kind, bold and timid, lofty and circumspect; the rage for celebrity, intrigues, mutual indulgence, and attention; finally, the art of praising, in order to be praised in return; of coupling the merits of others with our own; and of prepossessing the public opinion in our favour, either of ourselves, or by means of other people.

"As the mass of information is upon the whole greater, and the circulation more rapid, the women may without much difficulty be more polished than formerly. They adhere, however, to their plan, and seek to acquire knowledge merely as an embellishment of the understanding. In obtaining it, they wish rather to please than to know, rather to entertain themselves than to gain information.

" In a state of society in which there is a rapid change and succession of works and ideas, the women, who follow this ever-varying picture, must make themselves acquainted rather with the notions of the day, than with those of all ages, rather with the prevailing idea, than with that by which they are most improved. They must therefore study the language of the sciences more than their principles, they must make themselves mistresses of detached fragments rather than of whole systems.

" In the sixteenth century the women applied themselves to study, out of love to the sciences themselves. It was a living taste, excited by the spirit of the age, and cherished in retirement. At the present day it is not so much a genuine taste as intellectual coquetry, and luxurious ostentation rather than real wealth.

" From the same reason, many women had formerly the courage to take up the pen. Now-a-days, they may dispense with literary merit. Praises are bestowed on them unsought and unsolicited. The enjoyment of the present moments compensates them for that fame which continues after death. Each day satisfies the claims of each. A thousand other kinds of interest are blended with the interest

of their understanding. Their ideas rapidly skim over every subject, and instantly fly from one to another. They are hurried along by the general torrent.*"

To these ideas I shall add the following reflections, by one who was less of a *bel esprit*, but a more profound thinker and accurate observer than Thomas.†

"The qualities which fit men for society are, politeness without falsehood, frankness without rusticity, civility without fawning, respect without constraint, and, above all, a heart disposed to benevolence. Thus the good companion is likewise a good citizen, in the pre-eminent signification of the term.

"The amiable man, at least he who now goes by that appellation, gives himself little concern about the general welfare; but, on the other hand, spares no effort to please in every society into which caprice or accident conducts him, and is nevertheless disposed to sacrifice every member of every company. He loves nobody, and is beloved by none; he pleases all, and he is very often held in request and contempt by the same persons.

* I have omitted some short passages of the original, which are either so contorted, or so refined, that they cease to be intelligible.

† *Duclos Considérations sur les Mœurs*, p. 94, 95.

"By a singular contrast he is always engaged with others, and yet is satisfied with none but himself. He looks for his happiness from the opinion of others, without exactly courting their respect, which he may probably presume that he possesses, or with the nature of which he is unacquainted. The inordinate desire of amusing induces him to sacrifice absent persons, whom he most highly esteems, to the malice of those who are present, for whom he entertains less esteem, but who are listening to him at the moment. He is equally volatile and dangerous, and almost from conviction places slander and defamation in the number of social amusements, without giving it a thought that they have effects of a very different kind.

"The particular ties of the truly sociable man are so many bonds which unite him to the state. Those of the amiable man are, on the contrary, new dissipations, by which he is drawn away from essential duties. The sociable man inspires a wish to live with him; the amiable man merely excites a desire to meet him occasionally. This character is such a singular compound of vices, foibles, and follies, that the amiable man least deserves to be beloved.

"Nevertheless, the desire of passing for

an amiable person is daily becoming more and more a species of epidemic disease. How can it be otherwise, than that people should be fond of an appellation which obscures virtue, and causes vice to be forgiven! When a man is dishonoured to such a degree that his acquaintances are reproached for it, they admit the truth of the allegations. They do not clear themselves by attempting to vindicate their friend. It is very true, say they, but he is so amiable! This argument must be good, or at least universally admitted, for it is generally sufficient to stop every mouth. The most dangerous man, according to our present manners, is he, who with great vices unites vivacity and agreeableness. He is suffered to do just what he pleases, and in him every thing odious ceases to excite abhorrence.

"What is the consequence? All the world strives to be amiable, totally regardless of every thing besides. To this object people sacrifice their duties, and I might almost say, their character, if it were possible to lose that in this way. One of the most melancholy effects of this mania is, the contempt which they manifest for their rank and way of living, in which they ought always to take the highest pride.

"Magistrates regard study and business as disreputable employments, which are fit only for such people as are not made for the world. We observe, that men who fulfil their duties, become acquainted by mere accident with those who stand in need of them on certain occasions. Hence it is not rare to see amiable magistrates, who, in important concerns, are rather suitors than judges, and warmly commend the interest of their acquaintances to their colleagues.

"Military men, of a certain rank, imagine that zeal for the service belongs only to the subalterns. In their opinion, the superior gradations are merely distinctions of rank, and not offices which require the fulfilment of duties.

"The man of letters, who, by a due exertion of his powers, might have instructed his own age, and transmitted his name to posterity, neglects and often spoils his talents by withholding the necessary cultivation. He might have obtained a place among great men, but he is content to pass for a man of genius and an agreeable companion.

"Ambition itself, that violent and once so active passion, now seeks to attain its ends only by politeness and the art of pleasing. The principles of the ambitious

man were not better formerly than at present; his motives were not more laudable, or his measures more innocent. His works, however, were likely to be more useful to the state, and sometimes excited the emulation of virtue.

"I shall be told, that the desire of being amiable has rendered society much more agreeable than formerly. It may be so; but yet it is certain that the state has lost at least as much as society has gained; and this exchange is far from advantageous.

"What would be the consequence, if the mania of appearing amiable were to seize all the other classes! We shall find that there is just cause for such an apprehension, when we observe that it has penetrated to the order, which ought to set an example to all other ranks, and for which, the amiable qualifications of the present day would, at least in former times, have been unbecoming.

"As these amiable qualifications are in general grounded on things the most insignificant, the respect which we entertain for them gradually habituates us to an indifference for such as ought most to engage our attention. It would almost appear as if we had no interest whatever in the public welfare.

"Let a great general or statesman have performed for the country services ever so important, we dare not express our esteem for him till we have inquired whether he is an amiable man, and in what his amiable qualities consist; and yet there are some of which, it may be said, that they are unbecoming a great man, if he possesses them in an eminent degree.

"Every important question, every close argument, every national sentiment, are excluded from brilliant societies as violations of the *bon ton*. This expression, though of recent invention, is already very common, though its signification is not precisely determined. I shall proceed to say what I think of it.

"*Bon ton*, among the most accomplished persons, consists in speaking agreeably on the most insignificant subjects; in carefully abstaining from a rational discourse, unless it can be excused by the pleasing manner in which it is delivered; and, finally, when you are obliged to shew reason, to conceal it as cautiously as modesty formerly required a loose idea to be disguised. The agreeable is become so necessary, that even scandal would cease to be relished, if it were not recommended by this quality. It is not enough to injure. You must study, above all things,

to amuse; for, without this pleasing garb, the most malicious calumnies, instead of striking the intended victim, would only recoil upon the head of the author.

"The pretended *bon ton* requires much wit, though it only makes a wrong use of it. In persons of weak heads, it degenerates into an unintelligible jargon; and as these persons constitute the majority, this jargon has obtained the ascendancy. It is this that is called *persiflage*, a tedious stream of words destitute of ideas, and a rapid change of subjects, which excites the laughter of fools, is offensive to reason, embarrasses the sensible or modest man, and renders the company intolerable.

"This corrupt taste is sometimes less extravagant, and it is then so much the more dangerous. This case happens when you sacrifice a person, not aware of your intention, to the malignity of the company; making him at the same time the instrument and victim of the general malice; not only by means of the things which you father upon that person, but by the frank confessions which you contrive to draw from him.

"The courtier is firmly convinced that good company is not to be found but

among persons of that description. It is true, that with equal intellectual qualifications, courtiers possess a great advantage over other men, I mean, the art of expressing themselves in more select language, and more happy turns. The fools of the court clothe their silly ideas in a more pleasing dress than the fools of the capital. When people of the lower classes speak well, it is a proof either of intelligence or of education. In a courtier it is perfectly natural; he uses no improper words, because he is not acquainted with any. A courtier, who should make use of vulgar expressions, would appear to me to be nearly on a par with a literary man who speaks foreign languages. All acquirements depend indeed on the natural abilities, and, above all, on practice. The talent of expression, or rather of entertainment, must therefore exist in greater perfection at court than elsewhere, because there people must be continually talking, and yet say nothing. 'Tis this that produces such numerous turns, though the mass of their ideas is but limited.—From these observations it follows, that when courtiers of parts at the same time possess a good character, they form incontestably the most agreeable societies. Gaming

assists people of the world to endure the burden of existence. Even the talents which they sometimes call to their aid in the search of pleasure, prove the inanity of their souls, without tending to replenish them. All these expedients may be dispensed with by those in whom are combined good taste, confidence, and rational freedom."*

* *Duclos Considerations sur les Mœurs*, p. 105---107.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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